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Goodman

UNCLOTHED

UNCLOTHED

A Novel

BY

DANIEL CARSON GOODMAN

MITCHELL KENNERLEY
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXII

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This story is told alternately by the two chief characters, LAURENCE CREWDON *and* CLEODORE BLAKE.

UNCLOTHED

CHAPTER I

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

SHE was leaning over the accordion-pleated lid of her closed desk. "I thought that I had seen all the writers in the world — but go ahead, anyway," she said.

"That makes it hard," I replied quietly. "But I suppose you do get tired of them."

What was I to do? It was my fifth magazine for the day; it was already late evening —"Do you want to see the most remarkable story ever written?" I said half whimsically, but with some conviction.

She folded a pair of glorious, soft, white hands, looked at the clock, and then at me.

"Go ahead," she said. "It's my job."

"Well, that's all — most remarkable story ever written, story about the real life, the destiny of —"

"You know," she broke in, "everyone here

is gone but me, and I can't do shorthand, so your well chosen explanations —"

I interrupted her. "Oh, I am sorry. I know I haven't any business to keep you here at this late hour. I'll come in the morning."

"You are very kind."

For a moment we sat in silence. I suppose it meant dismissal for me, but I failed to recognise the fact.

Through the narrow window back of her desk I could look down upon the street below and see the end of the day pour its little people, like ants, upon the crowded streets.

An office boy darted in, coat half on, his cap stuck on his head slantwise.

"Good-night, Miss," he cried.

"Good-night, Tommy."

I had never listened to so kind a voice.

Then we heard his little fist pound against the wire caging of the elevator, and an "Aw, cut it, Kid!" gruffly from the automaton inside that ran the thing.

I found my eyes on her again. She looked tired, very tired, and she was so pretty; her mouth

was soft; the lips seemed to caress her in themselves; and she had blue eyes.

I looked at her, fascinated. I was walking into tragedy that day and didn't know it.

"I'll bring the story in to-morrow," said I. "If you would read it personally, I would be so appreciative."

"You know I'm not the editor," said she. "I'm only his assistant. But to-morrow will be all right."

I was at the door nearly when she stopped me. "You can stay a moment, if you will. Won't you sit down?" She has told me since that she thought she had treated me like a book agent, and felt sorry.

"Why, now you're kind. I—" I really was surprised.

"I am only asking you to stay on a bit, because —I think that if you talk some you would amuse me, and I am bored to death these days." I thought I saw a mischievous smile on her face.

However I smiled with her. Beneath her words I seemed to hear the plea of sincerity. At least I know that I wanted to stay. She told me

afterwards that my seriousness really amused her, but that I didn't attract her in the least. Women are queer in their impulses at times.

"I guess that you do get sick of your work, don't you?" I ventured.

My question seemed to make her restless.

"Oh, I like it all right. I have to — but tell me —"

She looked at my card, repeating my name, "Laurence Crewdon — Laurence Crewdon. I can't quite place you," she said finally.

I had sold one story, a few months before, to one of the big magazines, and got a hundred dollars for it. It was all the encouragement I had ever received, and sometimes I had thought to myself that I would rather have had none than so little. But now that I was asked the question direct, I was glad of my one miserable little success.

"That may be," I answered. "I haven't published a great deal of my work."

She seemed to be running over my name in her mind. "Why, yes," she said, apparently to herself, and then, "I know who you are. You

wrote that little story about the shop girl, didn't you?"

"Yes, I wrote that."

"You know — I liked that. What else have you published?"

I started an evasive reply, and then suddenly I found I could not lie to her. "Nothing," said I.

She got up and went to the window. "I think it's rather of an accomplishment to be truthful about one's own work. I don't suppose I'd be."

"Well," I went on, "I have written a great deal even if I haven't published much. I've been writing day and night for years."

"Why, you're only a boy," she said back banteringly. "But I guess you have worked hard." It seemed that she was noticing me now, for the first time. She had an odd way of answering me with her eyes on her desk or glancing out of the window.

As we talked on, I noticed again how tired and worn she looked. Her voice was wistful, sad, even. And then I became more impertinent.

"A young woman with your looks, as intelli-

gent as you must be, with the understanding that you must have — I'll bet you get sick of everything, and blue, and disconsolate." I did not lack effrontery that day. "But I suppose you are happier than I am."

"It doesn't take you long to talk personalities, does it," she said by way of reply.

"Not when I'm interested," I answered.

"I thank you," she laughed. At last there was cheeriness in her voice. To myself I said that I was in luck to find such a glorious creature on my literary tramp.

I went on. "But you haven't answered me. You ought to be fairly happy, doing what you love to do."

"Well, I am not — happy," she said. "Can't you see that?"

"Life is too short to be unhappy."

"It is only too short, if you are happy."

She spoke unconsciously, I thought, for as she realised her words and looked up to find me listening intently, I saw her catch the edge of her under lip between her teeth until they left a narrow reddened imprint.

"Please pardon me, won't you?" I begged.

Then she recovered from her momentary bewilderment and smiled gently. "It's hard, isn't it, to be artificial and brave all the time, when one wants just to lie down and die? But you'd best go!"

Apparently she had not wanted to be so easily confiding. I noticed a flush spread to her cheeks, and her hand touched restlessly one or another of the papers on her desk. It's difficult to be clever with a clever woman. And I did the wrong thing. I have often wondered since what possessed me. I leaned over and grasped her hand. I suppose that I meant it to be an expression of sympathy.

She drew back quickly. "Why — how strange you —" she started to say several things. I pretended not to notice when I saw her shrink back. At last I perceived that she had passed over the situation with leniency.

"If you will let me, I believe I can tell what is the trouble with you," I said, before I realised how ridiculous was my statement. "It's probably because you are trying to live a real living

life. That's just it. I discovered a long time ago that most of us are living dead lives, where there is no feeling, remorse or regret, even. Only irksome monotony, where the morrow casts its shadow on the day before."

She hesitated for a moment as if to decide whether to answer or be angry. "Your sentiment is not so bad," she then remarked. "But you'll give up some day. Perhaps I will too. And then we'll both be happy."

"But I am not going to give up," I declared.

With some satisfaction I saw that I had pulled myself out of my foolish blunder. "May I stop in to-morrow with the manuscript?" I asked as I took my cane and hat.

"Yes, please do," she answered.

I found myself back on the street a few minutes later. I hardly knew how I got there. It seemed that I only vaguely remembered that she had promised to read one of my stories. The big thing was that I had met her. As I walked on I realised that I had been talking to someone who really understood.

It was hard to keep from thinking of her that

night. Was she tall, and good looking — was she dark or fair? I couldn't remember, though I recalled her words, nearly all of them. It was her physical self that had escaped me. All but her eyes — and these I could never forget. They flashed so intensely full of life, in startling contrast to the pallid, worn face under them.

As I fell asleep that night I was less conscious than usual of my impoverished surroundings. It had rained the day before, and a big wet spot marked a leak in the roof, over my head. The night previous I had spent mostly in wondering what should happen if the plaster fell during my slumbers.

Now I saw a pretty, dark face, so soft and strange in its lines, and a wonderful pair of sad blue eyes.

And I kept wondering what she thought of me.

CHAPTER II

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

I WENT home happy the day that Laurence Crewdon called on me. It was for the first time in months.

Things were changed indeed since the time when my father used to tell me I was the happiest creature he had ever known.

"It's unearthly, little 'un," I remember his saying anxiously one day. "I am afraid for you."

I wondered what he meant by that.

"I mean that you are not one who is happy as an animal is. You're not a cow. You have a mind, but now you're happy from vitality and from lack of understanding. When your vitality slacks — it's bound to — when your understanding grows — Ah, I am afraid you'll be very unhappy one day, Cleodore!"

I do not suppose I gave much thought to what he said. And, if I did, it was to picture myself miserable in a dramatic way which would be

nearly as much fun as had been my previous happiness. If some tragic thing happened to me, I used to think, I would stand it as long as I could and then if life grew too terrible, I would finish it. One could always do that.

I did not understand.

I did not realise that the thing that's hard to bear is not the big tragedy, but the dull, grey, hopeless monotony of boredom. No affliction is so great as this — to have no single thing in life that is interesting, to have no single thing to look forward to, and each day to feel that one is growing older.

For the first time in my life, I felt " grown-up." My father would have called it by another name, I suppose, would have said it was as he had prophesied.

I rallied from his death very quickly, which surprised me. One reason was that I had many preoccupations. I found myself compelled to earn my own living. The novelty of it stunned me.

By the time I had worked into the new routine, my father was six months dead.

My courage was gone; I felt old. I was quite sincere about it too, although I was at that time barely twenty-three. After all I suppose youth is not an affair of numbers.

The strangeness of being a useful person instead of a decorative person tortured me. One day I nearly sobbed in the open street, as the conviction came upon me that before long I might really grow to tolerate the hideous bareness of my life; that I might even become resigned to the ugliness about me.

I suppose I was silly and affected, but anyway I did feel myself in those days a Vere-de-Vere amongst Mugginses, and I used to think I would rather remain a miserable, lonely Vere-de-Vere all my days than gradually to turn into a cheerful Muggins. And I was so afraid that I should.

I used to go to my office, hoping there might be a huge pile of manuscript waiting for me and much work to anæsthetise my mind.

I was not sure why I was so intensely, so grotesquely depressed. It may have been the fatigue of a pampered woman unaccustomed to work. It may have been grief and loneliness.

Or perhaps it was the strangeness and foreignness of my surroundings that robbed my life of its colour.

I was absurdly un-American and had sufficient sense of humour to realise how ridiculous it was that I, born in New Jersey and brought up there through most of my childhood, should talk with a foreign accent, should dress in a foreign fashion, and should feel myself a stranger in my own country.

The few people I met regarded all this as an affectation. Perhaps it was, more or less. Poses are the only protection that unhappy people and lonely people can find for themselves. And if I assumed the manner of the first civilised visitor to the Hottentots, it was not altogether from arrogance.

It was Crewdon's quick understanding of all this that caught my fancy that day when we first talked together. It was that sympathy that made him stand out so clearly from the first moment. It was sympathy that caught my fancy far more than any thing like love-at-first-sight — that psychological phenomenon that Larry has described

with care but little conviction in one of his stories.

The knowledge that I had found someone who understood, who neither laughed, nor looked down his nose when I told him that my native land, as I saw it revisited, seemed to me less homelike than the conventional idea of hell, thrilled me.

I walked down Broadway afterwards briskly. I wouldn't wonder if I hummed the "Habenera."

It was late afternoon when the boy brought in his card. The name "Laurence Crewdon" suggested nothing.

"He asked for me personally?"

The boy said no, that he had asked for the editor, who had gone home.

"He is not a life insurance agent, or a man to sell something?"

The boy thought not. "I guess he's an author," he said.

When the man came in, I noticed something ostentatiously normal about him. He was posing too, I felt sure.

His personality was a striking one. There was an expressiveness about him, he used his

hands in an odd way, picking up one thing after another — looking at it earnestly as he talked, even losing the thread of his sentences in the apparent interest of examining a penholder or a paper-weight.

I liked to watch him, and, perceiving that his business was of no great importance, I did not pay much heed to what he said, but amused myself by looking at him while he talked.

Gradually I began to listen. He was telling about his literary experiences. He mentioned the titles of several short stories, and the number of words each contained. He even brought in the names of several distinguished editors, together with some quotations from their critical remarks. He said very little, however, about stories accepted.

As his talk went on I, used to the gentle fashion with which authors are wont to slither over the lack of editorial appreciation, realised how things were with him, pitied the pathos of it, and wondered what the reason was. For the creature seemed of the stuff from which a writer

might be made. There was a wit about him, a certain feeling for words; and a Heaven-sent shrinking from the obvious.

After a time he stopped talking about himself and eyed me curiously.

"Pardon me," he blurted out, "you don't look happy. Are you?"

I was appalled at his familiarity and looked at him severely, but he was caressing the paper-weight and didn't notice. Then I realised from his pose, his voice, the expression of his face that he meant no harm. I saw there was a shrinking awkwardness about him, and felt he was saying in pure kindness what from someone else would only have been impertinent.

"Are you?" he repeated.

I told him quite simply that I was not. I expect I talked to him with much greater freedom than I could have allowed myself had he been a person of more social subtlety.

As soon as he got started talking, his gaucherie dropped away and he showed himself a man of extraordinary understanding.

After he had finally left I discovered that it was

past my usual closing time and that the rest of the office folk had gone.

At home that night I felt gay for the first time in months. Clementine noticed.

"Why, Mademoiselle," said she, "how well you look to-night. You have almost the air of being your old self again."

We had a very good dinner that night; Clementine had really picked up cooking extremely easily, considering she had never done any but maid's work. I remember how good was the bottle of California wine I drank. California wine varies so, but in those days it was all I could run to, and a dinner with even the harshest bottle of them all is better than one bedewed with only water.

I suppose I shall never get over thinking these small things important. After all it is something if one still drinks from a glass with a stem, wears silk stockings in the house, and breakfasts in one's bed like a denizen of civilisation.

I had a return that night of light-heartedness for a few minutes and it brought me nearer to my former life in sunny beautiful Rome, than I had

been for months. To think that it took no more than the visit of a wild-eyed, strange, bashful man who sympathised, to alter the face of the universe for me!

CHAPTER III

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

SHE read my stories. She was kind about them, but I do not suppose she greatly cared for them, and indeed, since I came across them among some old papers the other day and reread them, I don't wonder.

At any rate, however, she recognised their eccentricities. The psychological experience of my life has been such as to make my writing peculiar.

Starting out to the career of a doctor, I soon gave it up for writing. I had put my soul into doctoring at the beginning, and, for a time, the medicine attracted me. The unfolding of the many things involved around the function of living was interesting, provocative of further study. During the preliminary years in the university when I began to gain something of man in me, it almost seemed that this was really the goal of my desires; my days became filled with an eagerness to

delve further, to know why I breathed, slept, felt. I became a being sentient with expectancy.

And then, one day came the severance of my understanding of medicine from my love of it. It all came from my odd appreciation of life. I found I was expected to turn this art of mine into a profession and make a living from it.

A quarrel with my father brought the end more quickly.

"Look here, boy," he said, "don't you realise that you are dabbling away precious time? Surely you can't expect me to go on supporting a man of twenty-four!"

"Yes, father," I answered, "I know that. And I too hate to think of it."

"Then why don't you change?"

"How can I change?" I answered. "I don't see why I should. I didn't ask to come here."

After this I woke to practical things — I had to.

I found that others were doing the same thing that had seemed such an orgie of impossibility to me. Others were being friendly and kind and hypocritical that they might gather a livelihood.

I took an office on upper Broadway, a few blocks from my home. There I shared a reception room with a doctor whom I knew, so that the expenses were not so large at the beginning.

One day — I remember it very clearly, because my success as a physician dated from it — I was called in to attend a new patient.

I found her a woman who at first glance showed very little physical charm, being undersized and thinly skinned. She talked well, however, and I fancied that she must have appealed more to the mental sense of her husband than to the physical. One way and another I gathered that immediately after she was married she forgot the mental influence which had attracted her husband, and plunged into the abandon of a simple passionate love. The husband then, finding that the only attraction was gone from his wife, grew to comparing her with the other women of his acquaintance, upon whose plane she had so ignorantly placed herself. He found she had no further charm for him after this. He saw her wrinkles, the drooping, care-trodden face, eyes that went begging for love and devotion, and he

grew tired and uninterested. Presently he plunged into a life of morose dissipation, with the almost inevitable result to himself and to his wife.

As I viewed the poor woman and listened to as much of this as she herself understood, I couldn't help deploring the bestial rottenness of the husband's makeup.

The story was not an unusual one, at any rate to a physician, though the condition that confronted me was perplexing. Could I tell the husband that it was only through his excesses that his wife was suffering? Or should I keep both of them in ignorance? The problem troubled me. I found that I dared not tell the truth; it would disrupt his family, kill the poor wife's love and belief in her husband, and do no good whatever.

It was obvious that I had to lie.

I really traced my entire practice to the manner in which I handled this case, for I both cured her and kept my mouth shut. The wife sent me patients because she was cured. And the husband sent me patients too. I built up a good little practice in a very short time.

And then I began to think, and think hard. Instinctively, I plied myself with questions, and the paramount one never lost its haunting interrogation. It was this: What would have happened had I not lied? I began to upbraid myself for my insincerity, and because I understood neither life nor myself. I was indeed a very foolish youngster. One day I caught sight of myself in a mirror, and it appeared to me that already my insincerity was reflected upon my face. I seemed to see odd weak lines that frightened me. "What am I developing into?" I asked myself. I found that I was at war with my own life. I hated the absurdity of everything about me; and then, gradually and slowly I fell lower and lower down the scale of human resistance. Just before I gave up my career as a doctor, I felt that my moral self was quite as low as any mucker on the streets.

I took to drinking. If I had enough stimulant down me, I found that I became soothed, and so, quite philosophically, I kept up a fair pace. When I went to my room at night, the few ounces of whisky gave me peace and rest.

My intoxication each night became rather glorious; like a soft anæsthesia, but with the added advantage of certain awakening.

In this state of morbid unrest, a fixed purpose became impregnated within me, and the purpose grew until it became a part of me.

I had thought of writing as a vocation long before, and had worked in a desultory way at a book which, though practically a work of fiction, contented me most because it gave me opportunity to express my ideas. These thoughts of writing came back to me very forcibly at this time, and, after many weeks of hesitation, I one day stored away the office furniture and turned over what practice was still remaining to my associate.

I moved my few personal belongings and my typewriter to a boarding house I knew on Lexington Ave. It would have been much better if, at this moment, I could have had a home to go to, and I thought, as I settled myself in this new place, of how different it would have been, had my mother lived.

My father was furious at my sudden decision and literally turned me out of his home, telling

me that he was entirely disgusted with me, and never wanted to see me again. I left the house like a banished black sheep. And all the time I was nearly effeminately good. That was my weakness, and he thought it simple badness.

Not much of those first weeks remain in my memory. I stayed in my room and wrote along at the book, but it was slow work. I knew nothing of how to write, and destroyed many pages. It was only by chance that I was able to write what I wanted to say. I had sometimes to write out half a dozen times what I was trying to express before I came anywhere near my meaning.

I had no conception of what the practical side of writing was, and I was actually foolish enough to imagine that before the two hundred dollars which I had saved up from my practice was spent, I should be making a living out of my new profession. I really thought this, when the only piece of writing I had ever done (barring indeed several hundred scraps and sketches which I had turned out since my boyhood) was only half completed and that, in the roughest form.

Here was I, a man of nearly thirty, unprac-

tical enough to fancy that inside of a few weeks I should have finished this book, should have got it accepted by a publisher, and should be in a position to live off the proceeds.

It was laughable that a man who had been taking upon himself to control human suffering, and had not done it so badly after all, should have been so childish. But I knew nothing about writing and writers. I do not believe I had ever even met an author in my life except once when I was in Baden-Baden with my parents and was introduced to a very popular author from England, who used to speak frequently in an offhand way of the large sums she recovered from the work of her pen.

I suppose I may have said to myself, when this idea of giving up medicine for the profession of writing came seriously into my mind, "Why! if this silly woman, who does not even know enough to paint her face properly, can make big sums by writing, a man like me is safe enough to go into it with a few hundred to keep him going while he gets a start."

My book was about three-quarters completed

when I realised it would take me a good deal longer than I had bargained for, to finish it. This upset me particularly because I discovered that my money would be gone before the work was done.

So I decided I would make a little ready money by writing a few short stories. I had studied the stories that were in the magazines, and I thought that I could write more intelligently than the majority of them.

The part that struck me most was the constant introduction of love. At this time that appeared to me artificial and almost ridiculous. I seemed always to have an aversion to women and love-making, and thought that the petty love episodes, on which so much emphasis was laid, were unnecessary. It may have been because I, although I had vaguely expected a great love affair some day, had never had one, or hardly any companionship with a woman, for whom I cared.

I was a weird young person, and had no understanding of the natural order of things. When in the presence of women I drew away from them. Some I even hated with an intense, unexplainable

aversion, probably for no more reason than that they were of the opposite sex. At times, it had been a hard fight to keep a knowledge of this from my father.

I wrote some short stories trying to show life and the relationship between men and women as I saw them. I tried to show that so-called love was often subterfuge or self-deception.

When I had finished a few I posted them to the magazines, and had them rejected without comments. This hurt me, aside from the disappointment, for things were really getting serious and I had depended on these stories to bring me in some money. When I came to count my funds, I found I had only eighteen dollars left.

For a time I was bewildered, then I recalled that there remained to me still a slight resource in the stored furniture. I sold it and realised something over a hundred dollars.

The possession of this sum of money acted as a stimulant to me, and I resolved to approach some editor in person with these stories, feeling that they had not a fair chance when submitted through the mail.

I took them to the editor of the magazine I liked and respected the most. The editor saw me himself, which I learned afterwards was not usual. Though he was very kind, I went away from him realising, for the first time, that the disposing of literature was a very difficult task. I comprehended now that there were perhaps a half dozen others in the same street car who too were writers in the embryo.

I went to see him again.

"Well, how do you like them?" I asked as he greeted me.

He grunted. "Not so bad. But we can't use them. I've really read these over personally, and believe that you might possibly find a magazine that would want this sort of stories." He handed them back to me.

"Then you don't want them?"

"No. But you must not be discouraged. If you would write the sort of story we are looking for, I believe we might use it." And then he outlined to me the sort of story he was looking for. It was a very twaddling tale about a shop girl and the life she led. I thought it unreal and

useless, but he became more and more delighted with it as he went on.

Finally, full of enthusiasm, he said, "Now, why don't you write something like that for us?"

I went home and tried to write such a story as he had described, and when I had it done, I took it to him. The astonishing thing was he bought it.

The sale of this story was the greatest discouragement I had yet encountered. I had given up a profession to write what had meaning to me, and here in a short time I found myself forced to repeat in this new profession, all the vile insincerity which had so plagued me in the other.

For three months after this I haunted the offices of magazine editors trying to dispose of my stories. I became a living directory of the New York magazines, and at last I learned with overwhelming conviction that my stories were not marketable. Wherever I went, I met with the same answer; they told me: "Your stuff is too psychological; if you'd only try to write stories with some human interest, I think we might use them."

Human interest! They thought the slop they printed represented humanity.

For a short time, I discontinued writing altogether, and took to tramping the streets, partly in the hope that I might gather new ideas, but more from a sense of utter loneliness and discouragement — I had cut loose from the few friends I had.

One day I remember I walked miles. I went the entire length of Broadway and Fifth Avenue, watching the crowd and analysing the faces as they passed me. I grew to comparing myself with the others and I saw how sadly low I was in the balance.

I found a growing bitterness in myself. It seemed that of a sudden something had given way. For the first time in my life I noticed that others had for necessities what were to me luxuries.

On Fifth Avenue I saw that women wore bouquets that represented a week's living to me, that their worthless lap dogs were treated better by the world than I was.

I was slipping down. A communism was es-

tablishing itself between me and the man out of a job.

One day I passed a woman; she was gowned perfectly. A diamond pendant, nearly concealed, hung down from a fluffy mass beneath her chin.

It set me afire. The shining brilliant half hidden tantalised me, seemed to mock me and I had a growing passion to snatch the thing away from her.

The compelling motive I realised, was not to gain anything, but to cut down the distance between the woman of luxury and myself. The feeling passed off quickly, and I walked down the street tranquilly enough. But for the first time I saw an over-impelling newness in my method of reasoning.

I tell these things so as to make clear what my state was when I met Cleodore. At the time I believed she saved my life. I believe it still.

The more I saw of her, the more I appreciated her.

"You have been in my thoughts every minute since I was with you," I said to her, as I greeted her on my second visit.

I noticed that the expression of her face had changed. The careworn look on it had passed away. I thought I saw new life in her smile.

"You're better, aren't you?"

She smiled wistfully as she answered me. "I believe I am — somewhat. How are you? Are you working hard?"

"Hard enough," I replied, "but I am so restless, I have not accomplished much."

"Perhaps you only think so," said she. "Writing is a strange art. Sometimes when a person thinks he is accomplishing the least, he is really doing his best work."

"That may be true. But when a man nearly thirty years old begins to discover what gives him happiness and then cannot have it, though he's willing to forego decent food, cleanliness, anything, temporarily, for the end, it's —" I meant to say hell, but stopped. I had worked myself up tremendously. I ended up by saying that I believed I was fooling myself after all, and that I didn't see how I could hold out.

"Oh, you silly child," she cried out at me, laughing, though I believe I saw her eyes moisten

with tears, "you're only a boy with an ambition and now you're thinking too much of the boy. Let us see. You must first get started along the right lines. You might get something into print. That's the best encouragement. And then I am letting you come to see me. You are unappreciative."

She noticed the manuscript I had brought. "So you did bring me something, didn't you?" she remarked. "Good, I'll read it before I go to bed."

For a moment I left her and walked over to the window. I couldn't think clearly with her great big eyes, inquisitive, searching, before me — and the little rounded body that seemed so inconsistent with the intellect it carried.

It was only the second time we had been together and yet the ingrowing physical being in me was ruling. Till now I had always held this desire in me as a thing subordinate to my mental wants — and had always conquered. But now, just at the time I ought to be thinking clearly, I was lost blindly in a passionate sentiment.

It may have been because I had gone so long

without it. At times, before, when I was groping around blindly in the dark, writing forlornly, night after night, I had sometimes encountered a dream that would, for the moment, rouse me from myself, and my enforced passiveness. A sweet languorous face, trim corsage, hips that seemed protruding through their silken cover — the entire figure indolent, supple, caressable,— and for the moment my thoughts would chase themselves wantonly to the end, lascivious from long controlled emotions . . . and then I would shut my eyes. And I had done this ever since I had been able to think for myself.

But now I was in her apartment. The time might come when I would kiss her. As I stood by the window, peering down upon the street, it was like looking over the past, as if I was standing by and watching my life parade in retrospect before me. And it seemed that I could only wonder at it, and pity it. I thought of the many years of continuous waiting, the sacrifice of time, and yearning. The memory seemed to hurt me more now, than ever before.

The effect of our meeting was strange upon

both of us. We would talk a few minutes and then be unconsciously silent. If we looked at each other, our glances seemed to become locked.

While I had been thinking at the window, she evidently had been studying me.

"You asked me in the office the other day if I was happy. I wonder if you know how difficult it is to be happy."

"Of course," I answered. "If I didn't, I shouldn't want to write."

As I found her listening to me, I went on, talking slowly and softly. It was of one piece, this evening — the soft yellow light shining down upon her, her face propped up between two beautiful arms.

"Really I have discovered that we can have happiness if we are only willing to pay the price. And it is a costly thing — for ambition, years of perilous waiting and sacrificed time; for joy, just so much pain to measure it by. Oh, I could go on —" I exclaimed earnestly.

"Well," she broke in, "you are right when you talk of the payment, and I guess a woman must pay the greatest price in whatever she does.

If she wants to think for herself, be independent of others, she must suffer from intense isolation, no matter how good she is. Oh, it means so much to stand free, and do what one wants to do because one just wants to do it. You can't know. I've got to think of everyone's opinion but my own." Then she lost herself in a spell of thought, staring steadily out of the window.

The next time I saw her we went over the manuscript I had left. It was a glorious day and somehow I felt the need of sharing it with someone, which was a new appreciation for me.

I called for her at the magazine office.

"You are very kind, to call for me," she said gaily as I greeted her. "I am glad you thought to come."

We walked on out of the shadows of the corridor and out on to the avenue, all glowing with sunlight and gay colours. I really felt the joy of living. It seemed to penetrate my entire being.

She caught me staring at her.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

I had never seen such a pretty woman in my life, and I told her so.

She threw off my inquisitiveness by asking if I was happier to-day. I found her in turn searching my eyes.

"Yes, I am happier — for some reason," I replied.

"Ah, I believe I know," she assented. "It's because you're only human after all, and just as responsive."

I caught her meaning unawares. It gave me a secret pleasure. Unwittingly, I saw that she had acknowledged me different from the others. It gave me hopes for my manuscript.

"You've something to tell me about the story," I said calmly. "Please tell me."

We were crossing the park in Madison Square; the big tower of the Metropolitan looming up into the sky, overwhelming, almost eerie, seemed to mock and laugh at me. It made me feel so inconsequential, made me realise that I was of too little importance to have moods. I have always had this feeling when I get near such a product of another's genius.

I was fortified and, for the moment, quite brave. We walked on in silence between the

rows of park benches. At last she answered me with much gravity. "Well, I *have* something to tell you," she commenced. "It's the old story, too, and I hate to do it." Then she paused. I could see a corner of her lip bit in between the teeth. Parenthetically, she went on, and her words came strangely good to my ears. "Somehow, you have come to mean a bit of something else to me. You're so strange or else I haven't had enough to do — with men."

I heard her confession joyously. What did I care about the manuscript. I found myself welcoming the worst she could tell me.

"Your stories are tremendously interesting — tremendously," she went on. "I believe, though, that I see the one fault. You must have had a hard life and the stories show it. That's just the trouble; you picture your own feelings, your own morbid feelings, and while you do write with understanding, still you are always yourself in the story and persist in putting your own moods ahead of everything else. This is the trouble with all beginners. It's just as bad as a painter who would paint a ballroom scene and put heavy

lines of suffering on the dancers' faces because he happened to be starving in a garret at the time.

"Oh, it's too bad, but that's what makes so many who have been disappointed in life take to writing; feeling that if they could portray their sufferings on paper, the world would stand back in amazement. Of course, though, you are a cut above these affected people.

"I don't believe readers care what the writer goes through. They have the story before them and they are interested only in that. If you want to succeed, you must forget everything but the force you are creating. You must be nearly artificial, not even daring to write incidents of your own life, should they mean anything to you. I wonder if this isn't your great fault?" she continued. "You can't forget yourself in your work and you'll never do what you're capable of unless you change."

I listened to her words with very little concern. It seemed to me that I heard defined for the first time, what was really the trouble with my work.

"You realise this?" she asked.

"I realised it, and never understood, but now I do," I affirmed.

"Then what do you intend doing — you have written so many things? They are probably as" — she hesitated — "as bad as the one I have read."

"Then I'll do them all over," I replied, "I must make them a go. You can't know what it means to me."

"And you intend to go over everything? All you have done? Wouldn't it be better to do some new things in the new way? Maybe you'd do better at longer tales. It doesn't seem to me that your touch suits short stories."

"How discerning you are," I said. "I have written a longer tale, a book, and have it more than half done, and to me it seems better than any of these short things. I mean to write something good. I've got to. I have torn down all the bridges, I can't go back."

"Yes, that's just what I feared. Oh, I want to encourage you, but I don't dare; for fear that you might blame me for it some day. I can't get beyond my own selfishness."

She was gazing on the ground ahead of her. As we walked on, I thought I could perceive a pained, odd expression on her face. She was feeling sad over me. Yes, that was it. "Great!" I came near shouting. I wakened to the fact, the truth of it — and felt joyed again. She was sad over my troubles. "That shows that she cares, you fool," I said over and over to myself.

I was really happy. She must have noticed it, for I caught her looking up interestedly. Then she grasped my arm.

"You are laughing," she remarked, perplexedly. "Why?"

For the moment my task of explanation seemed too much. That she would understand, I knew very well, but did I dare tell her.

At last I replied. I know now that I told her the truth that afternoon.

"Well, I am happy because I've found a friend," my words came smiling. "You remember what Stevenson said when he was only twenty-two? He wanted three things, good health, fifteen hundred pounds a year, and 'Oh, du lieber

Gott,— Friends.' Yes, I'm glad that — that someone really cares."

For the instant she reddened. My presumption appeared to have angered her. Then she surprised me.

"I do care, a little," she said. "You are the only man I know who is brave enough to suffer alone. Most men can't endure hard luck and ill fortune unless they have a woman to share it. Then they are happy in their own miserableness. Yes, I do care, though you haven't done a blessed thing to make me."

As her words of understanding came to my ears I became filled with appreciation. Unconsciously I took her hand in mine, nor did she appear to resist me.

"We seldom find anyone who understands," was all my ecstasy would let me say. "It is rare fortune that I found you. Life holds out so little for the most of us."

It seemed that I had said the right thing. Her face brightened into a soft smile, full of feeling, and I thought I felt her press my hand in return. As we walked on and talked, I became

immersed in a flood of tranquillity and peace.

In too short a time, she had left me.

Her words had made me happy, but now — I was alone.

I walked hurriedly back over to Fifth Avenue. How it seemed to mock me now. How lonely I was. There was such a contrast. After all, I might have been brave when I told her I should do everything over, but I realised in an instant that it had been only transitory bravery. My spirits were as deep in the mire now, as they had been high, before.

Perhaps I had been brave for her sake, I reasoned, and the thought gave me some pleasure; but just as soon as I remembered what she had told me — which reduced to its true meaning, meant that I had no right to my ambition, that I was a failure — I became overwhelmed by sadness again.

I reached my own steps when it was nearly dark. I had walked for nearly three hours, tramping along in a delirious sort of haste. I felt half exhausted from the muscular effort and

yet so restless, my senses distorted with so many thoughts, that I could have walked on everlastingly.

However, I dragged myself up the stairway to my room. It was uninviting, dismal, lonely. I sat down on the edge of the bed, feeling sick and choked. Another start, more sacrifice, I said over and over to myself.

I can't tell how long I sat there, but the stars were out, I noticed, when my landlady, a very kind woman, came in and asked me if I would take my meal in my room. They had missed me at the table.

"You are looking very tired and worn, Mr. Crewdon," she said. "Perhaps you should best tuck yourself in bed and just let that infernal writing go. It ain't no business for a poor man anyhow. You're just worn out, ain't you?"

I was a bit tired, I said, and if she didn't mind I would take a bite in my room and then retire. Yes, I had had a very hard day.

"You had some more of them manuscripts rejected, didn't you?" she inquired. "I knew that was it. My boy, you're not strong and you're

one of them that takes things to heart. I can see it and you've got no business to eat your soul out with this fool writing. I'll bet your folks don't know what you're doing, do they?"

"Well, no, they don't," I said bitterly.

"I knew it. You're all alike. I had a fellow here once before, with a artistic temperament. He played the violin. His ambition was to become great and have all the four hundred inviting him into their mansions. He used to tell about it at the table. But he got over that soon enough."

Talking with her helped me. It took me out of my own thoughts for the moment. "Won't you sit down?" I said. "Tell me more about him."

"Oh, there ain't so much to tell," she answered, as she went over and took a rocker, "except that I got him a job with a railroad man that used to live here. The boy is a conductor now. Makes Reading, twice a week. I didn't know him when he came here about three months after. He'd gained over twenty pounds and was just as happy as could be. He told us how he'd found a fine little girl and was going to marry

soon. It's a good thing *he* had some sense left."

I agreed with her in all she said, poor woman, and told her I didn't believe I'd hold out much longer myself.

Soon someone at the door called her away, but it was hours after I had gone to bed before I found any rest. Tossing on my pillow, my senses recoiled under the burden of a thousand recollections. Every cell in my brain seemed a haven for painful memories that recalled nothing but one sordid failure after another.

I tried hard to get past my own consciousness, but with no result. I was lost between the paralleling influence of an ambition on one side, and vindictive failure on the other.

The night became quite unbearable. My nerves seemed to tear and twitch ruthlessly, and whenever I thought of the afternoon, my heart ached. For a moment I would think of her, I would see the drooping lids, I would see the tears that came in her eyes, and for the moment I would be happy. But just as soon, her words would come back to me, with the thought of to-morrow. I could not sleep, and I remember that I laid there the whole night in wide awake misery.

CHAPTER IV

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

"THIS being a woman," said I to Crewdon, "is as complex as running a steam-engine; and nobody seems even to realise it."

In the timid sunshine, he had dropped into what was nearly a doze. Half awake, he heard and answered me with the determination of one who wants to conceal the fact that he has been asleep.

"Everything's complex!" said he flat-footedly.

The doze had not been happy. I knew that a dozen little worries teased the poor lad. Editors declined to sympathise; the exchequer dwindled; days passed and left behind only the weariness of time spent for nothing. He even had a cold in his head, and he turned up his collar; as he sat in the open-air by me in the wretched parklette of Madison Square, he felt, I fancy, that the demarcation was slight between him and the permanent inhabitants.

Our acquaintance had — as the saying goes — ripened, and with astonishing speed. The gardener who tends such romantic fruit, whether he be a le Bon Dieu or Monseigneur the Devil, had set us in his hottest hot-house, and there resulted one of the incredible situations of which every life is full.

Of his first visit to my flat, I remember nothing. One remembers things erratically; a patch clear as a window pane, then a patch impervious as a safety vault. The events and the atmosphere of a certain unimportant Monday, you and I will remember till we lie dying. Of the infinitely more interesting Tuesday we have lost the memory inside a fortnight. And, seemingly, there is no reason. But then, I do not believe in reasons — chance and le Bon Dieu who likes his joke — that's how the world is run. And I suppose God was having his joke that day.

I went on talking. One could always talk to Crewdon, even when he dozed there was a sympathy in the purr of his deepened breathing. I went on about the complexity of being female.

"You say everything is complicated. Yes —

but not in the same way that it is complicated to be a woman. The muddle of it is limitless. You've no idea. It's simply appalling."

I found myself gesticulating as though I was delivering a lecture. I have always had certain ideas about women, but I have hesitated to talk seriously to the men who liked me. Crewdon was nearly asleep, however, so it seemed an excellent chance for me to work them off.

"Don't get so excited," he interrupted. "Those people over there will think this is the opening scene of a real-life love tragedy. I don't know why a well-brought up American woman should gesticulate like an organ grinder, the way you do . . . Yet, it goes with you somehow."

". . . simply appalling," I went on, "you see le Bon Dieu made woman for a certain specific purpose and—"

"In the first place how do you know the good God made her? And secondly how do you know what he made her for? I wonder?—I wonder what he made you for, child?"

The poor drab on the next seat made a diver-

sion, jumping up with a squeal and crying, "Oh, Gawd," in some miserable dream. Then in huge boots and festoons of muddy skirts she shuffled off to another bench.

"Never mind who made her — anyway, there was a certain purpose in the mind that did it, and somehow considering this purpose, all the other things she tries to do seem so silly. I am sure le Bon Dieu must think me for example very laughable. Here I am a healthy young woman, spending my time in offices, and all kinds of stupid mental exercises, when according to the ground plan of things, I ought to be making myself pleasant to some man or other. We are really meant to be just articles of furniture or bits of landscape — we women — and if we try to be something else, it makes life very muddling for us."

"Rats! There's nobody nowadays denies a woman's right to be an individual."

"More rats!" said I. "The woman denies it herself. We pull ourselves two ways at once. We try to be individuals and we long to be articles of furniture, but we can't be both — oh, we

can't! All the time we're working and being somebody we feel uneasy and ridiculous and out of place — I mean we feel it always underneath and we realise it every now and then, and yet whenever the chance comes to be furniture, we draw back and say 'oh! I couldn't sacrifice my individuality —' and if we do, we're unhappy, and if we don't we are unhappy. Oh! wish I had been born a turnip."

"I daresay it's an intricate job being a turnip, if we only knew," said he, and in the peace of the poor little sunny park, somehow, the absurdity seemed true. Utterly lacking in a sense of humour in some ways, he had a quaint outlook on things and a delightful ability to discard life's clíches.

I found Crewdon wide awake now.

"Do you notice," he said, "how all of these people have newspapers in their hands? It seems to me to be part of the pitiful pride of this country that no man will sit paperless and brood in the park as European unfortunates do. The American thinks he must hold in his hands a newspaper, if for nothing more than to create in his own eyes

the illusion that he is a prosperous man of position, taking an hour's relaxation in the open with the day's news. It's too bad that this unrealness must even extend to tramps. They, at least, might live sincerely."

"At least there's no pretentiousness about the women here," said I. "My sex never puts on any airs. The moment that other people stop considering them, they stop considering themselves. Look at that poor woman who squealed a minute ago. I wonder what her life has been."

"Probably she started as a scrub woman — poor devil!" he answered.

"How terrible to start so low and yet to fall still lower; to start life in the world's basement and to find the only elevators are going down. I hate to look at creatures like that and think they're women," said I. "But that's a brutal thought, isn't it?"

We wandered over to the West Side to a little place I knew, which consorted better with the slimness of my friend's exchequer than with our gastronomic tastes. Afterwards content, if not

satisfied, we walked back to my flat and talked through the evening.

I thought him curious, not quite human, I recollect. I fancied Heaven had pitied my loneliness, and made this creature specially to cheer me, a sort of Adam to play to my poor lonely Eve.

When we talked, he made himself out by reminiscence little better than a mad man. But I did not think him mad, since but for selfishness, I too might easily have shaped my life as he had shaped his.

To him, I showed myself at my worst, did it purposely, though more through instinct than reasoningly, for I was in so hideous a mood, that all subconsciously, I realised I could not charm people legitimately, that my only course was to startle them and to secure some sort of interest from them by the eccentricity of my behaviour, and almost repulsive tone of my talking. So to this stranger I pictured myself selfish, morbid, sensual, ill-balanced.

I was none too kind to him either, but he seemed not to blame me, nor indeed even to notice, except that sometimes he would say, " You're

unkind to yourself, child. I can't let you be like this. It isn't real."

Unconscious of my own ugly pretence, I did not realise the truth of what he said. It seemed indeed that he understood me better than I understood myself. Perhaps it was not difficult, for I did not, nor ever have, understood myself at all.

We talked of every human thing, but not of non-human things, for facts and book knowledge interested us not at all. We talked of ourselves, and of art, and of love, and of marriage, and friendships, and food and drink. We were amazingly frank with one another,— and amazingly reserved. That he, poor man, was literally on the brink of starving, I never knew till the horridness of it was a humorous memory (though money never was plentiful, to be sure), nor did I speak to him of what was worrying me most.

Or at any rate I did not speak directly. I do not think one who has a preoccupation can ever keep it out of conversation.

Perhaps he guessed. He was uncannily clever.

That night, I saw fit to speak of marriage.

"What do you think about it?" said I.

"I don't think about it at all," he replied. "I am afraid it'll put notions into my head and I'll go do it. You remember the old lady who told the children not to push beans up their noses?"

"That's the trouble with discussing marriage," said I impatiently. "People always seem to talk in the vein of a society comedy — silly epigrams that mean just as little said backwards as they do said forwards — you know the kind of talk."

"To be sure I do. A taste of marriage is like a taste for caviar; some people like it naturally; the only way to keep them single would be to put them in jail. Some people hate it naturally, they wouldn't marry if it was the only road to salvation; and some people acquire the taste because they see it's the only way to get some special person — Heaven pity them! — that's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Yes — but that seems rather true, and epigrams always are lies. Suppose it is true, how can one know whether he's marrying from a taste for matrimony or from an infatuation for a person, whether it will be a case of Heaven having

been kind to him, or of Heaven being the only thing that can help him?"

"Oh, one can't know!"

"Which would I do?"

Crewdon looked at me meditatively. "Blest if I could say," he replied, and added, "perhaps all we people who think, would be wise not to marry, if we could face our loneliness."

"Loneliness," said I. "But isn't it better to be lonely by oneself than in company?"

"I suppose so, but you see there's always the chance, just the little chance, that things would turn out well, that you wouldn't be lonely. It's that we gamble on — one chance in ninety, perhaps — and a million people take it every year."

"I shall probably take it myself," I put in pessimistically.

"Probably — you might do worse. A woman needs marriage. *She* can't dare face the loneliness. Don't you sometimes think when you see an elderly unmarried woman, of the hold luggage on an ocean voyage with its big labels 'NOT WANTED?'"

"Yes — and I often think the same of the elderly married woman too."

"Still," he reminded me, "you mean to marry?"

"Sometimes I fear so, and sometimes I hope so, but I am always pretty certain that I shall."

"Well, for you, for any woman, it's the only way."

"The only way where?"

"Into real things. One must have love, material love is one's life."

"But need one marry to get it?"

"One need not, but it seems as if a woman does better to."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well," said he, "how about society, if she doesn't?"

"Confound society!" said I. "I do not care a whoop about the good of the nation. I care for myself and my friends, especially myself. The nation may each and all marry three times a day and twelve times on Sundays for all of me. But should I marry?"

"What's the choice? What would you do, if you did not marry?"

"Stop single, I expect."

"You'd not take a lover?"

"Isn't that rather a silly thing to do? One always suffers for it."

"Always in books. But surely you don't think it right to do a thing if a two-dollar justice of the peace gives you authority and wrong if the authority comes from your own heart?"

"No, it isn't an affair of right or wrong to me. But is it advisable?"

"Probably not. The only really advisable thing is to lie down and die. It surely isn't advisable to do anything. But it's more fun."

"Ah — fun!" said I and stood up looking out through the treacherous soft air of New York's May, and shivered. "Women aren't supposed to want fun. Perhaps none of them does, but me."

"I think they do. Only most of them take it, instead of thinking about it. What kind of fun do you want?"

"All kinds. I would like to go into the country and lie in the sun for a month and eat beautiful things, and drink beautiful things, and have somebody play French waltzes to me with a fiddle and a harp and read me Stevenson and de Maupassant. . . . Oh, you don't know, nobody knows but me, what it is to lie in the sun!"

"I know," said he, and I dropped back in my chair and laughed.

"That's what I'd like to do," said I, "and here am I going to an office every day and sitting there hour after hour grizzling and then coming home so tired in the evening that all I can do is to sit and grizzle more. And every day that passes makes me a day older. Why, sometimes it seems as if it would be better to elope with a car-conductor."

"And yet you've not done it?"

"I never was asked," said I. "I do not think I am popular with car-conductors. But, if I only were, I believe I'd be ready to run off with one some day. Sometimes anything seems better than oneself; the lowest degradation seems preferable to loneliness."

"I wonder," he speculated, "if you would be so unconventional in your views if such a thing came to be a real question in your life. Somehow, in the big moments, one seems instinctively to act in the fashion that is the fashion. And it's a good thing too. There is nothing so stupid as doing unusual things."

"And nothing so much fun," I interjected.

"That may be, but it's stupid just the same. The wisest course is to do just what everybody else does. Perhaps you have noticed that all the really unintelligent acts are performed by intelligent people. The ordinary-minded person who never thinks of himself does instinctively what his neighbours do and nine times in ten it is the right thing to do. It is the original person who thinks up out-of-the-way fashions of making a fool of himself. He's too superior to do what the rest of the world does, and — humiliating as it is to confess it — the longer I live, the more I realise that what all the world does, is the wisest thing. It's a sickening admission, but I believe there's more sound sense in the copy-book maxims, than in all my brilliant and original philosophy."

"My friend," said I, "what you are saying is as insincere as the compliments of the saleswoman in a hat-shop. You have no more intention than I have of turning into a copy-book hero. You hate the proletariat and all its ways as bitterly as I do myself."

"I expect you are right," he replied. "But sometimes it comes over me how much wiser it is to be able to think and act like everybody else. You must feel it too sometimes, and I expect that when the impulse really comes into your life to live scarlet, there'll come promptly just such a reaction that will dye your blithe impulse a safe conventional drab. . . . I wonder if it will? . . ."

"And I wonder too," said I.

CHAPTER V

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

THE better I got to know Cleodore the more I realised her charm.

On the afternoon I finished work on my novel, I hurried over to call on her. I had already been with her twice that week, and felt ashamed to go again. But the exhilarating delight of her presence, and the need I felt for her, had come to be a part of me.

I hesitated even more, when at her door, Clementine told me that her mistress was ill, and might not see me.

I said not to ask, that I would come another time.

"Not at all," objected the old French woman, "if Mademoiselle will see you, it will be excellent. You, a doctor, can help her, perhaps."

From inside, Cleodore's voice called, "Is that Dr. Crewdon, Clementine? Bring him in. Fetch me my tea-gown. I'll get up and see him."

As she came into the sitting-room, she steadied herself against the door-jamb.

"Why, girl, what is it? You're not ill, are you?" I asked.

"Hush!" she whispered, pointing to her bedroom, where Clementine was moving about behind the half open door.

When the woman had gone out, she told me she had fainted. "And I am nearly ashamed to tell you why," she added.

"Well, anyway, can't you tell me, or is it a mystery?" I asked.

"Surely I can tell you," she said, "only I didn't want Clementine to hear." And then she went on to relate how she had come into the room after a hot walk from her office to find Clementine posing in front of her bedroom mirror bedecked in a new evening gown which had only recently come home.

"I expect I was a fool to feel as I did," she went on, "but when I saw the dear old soul, beaming so radiantly happy at herself in the mirror, I didn't have the heart to spoil it. The poor thing would have felt so silly if she'd known I

was looking. So I crouched down back of the bed until she had taken the gown off and hung it in the closet. I suppose I was tired anyway when I came in; at least before I knew it, my head seemed queer."

"You mean you fainted to save Clementine's pride?"

Cleodore laughed. "It does seem foolish, doesn't it?"

Her goodness of heart affected me strangely. "You're a wonderful little person," I said to her, "and I believe you wear yourself out being good to others."

Then I noticed that she was still pale. "Come," I said, "this will never do. You need a bracer." And I took hold of her hand, and pulled her into the dining-room.

On the side-board stood a decanter.

"It's too bad," I remarked—"that that isn't whisky. It's just what you ought to have."

"You do my morals an injustice, sir," she said. "That is whisky."

I poured out some for her, and made her drink

it. It did me good to see the blood rush back to her face.

"You see," I said manfully, "you need a doctor by you — always."

It was growing dark outside and Clementine came in to light the candles.

"That's a funny custom," said I. "Don't you use the electric lights?"

"I only use them for my acquaintances; I use candles for my friends."

"But you used candle light the first evening I came here," I said.

I stayed for dinner. I was master of the house that night, I remember. I poured the soup, carved the fowl and was happier than I had ever been before in my whole life. I realised then, what pleasure there was in being with the woman one craved.

"What about your Squib?" she asked after we had finished our coffee and cigarettes.

I didn't understand her.

"Oh, I mean your long novel," she explained. "I always call the stories my friends write, Squibs."

"Well," I laughed, "my Squib was finished this afternoon and as soon as I have made a few revisions I am going to take it to Mr. Garvin."

"Oh, I wish you could have shown it to me first, but of course it's important he should see it, since he asked to. But haven't you another copy you can give me?"

"No, I write directly on the typewriter, and I didn't make a carbon, but I'll show it to you as soon as Mr. Garvin rejects it," and I laughed.

"What's it about?" she asked.

"Oh, it's about me, like all the others! I'm most anxious for your opinion on the woman."

"Maybe you overestimate the value of my opinion. One who hasn't any ability to write really hasn't the right to criticise."

"Don't you write at all?" I asked. "Then where did you get your critical understanding?"

"Well, if I have any ability," she said, "it came partly by inheritance, but more by environment. My father was 'Denis Blake.' You know his work, of course? It's possible that you don't, though. He never had a wide popularity. He was too good."

"Yes, I do," said I quickly. It delighted me to think that she was the child of this consummate artist.

"If he'd been less good," she went on, "I wouldn't have to be working in an office now. The sales of his books are pitiful."

Something pathetic seemed to come into Cleodore's face as she talked of her father.

"I wish you'd tell me some more about this time of your life, the time when you and he were together."

Then I regretted my question, for she seemed even sadder than before.

"I am sorry — that I asked you. You needn't tell," I quickly intruded.

"No, that's all right," she reassured me. "I am glad to talk about it, though it's probably the first time I have, since I came away from Rome."

"But you are an American, aren't you?" I asked.

"Yes, of course, but when my mother died, we wandered about abroad and finally settled in Rome. I lived there till six months ago."

"Why did you come back?"

"I didn't want to starve. His friends secured me my present position, and I had to take it."

I noticed her eyes filled with tears. "You mustn't talk so," I said to her. "It's the troubles you have had that make you understand. You never could have helped me, but for the things you suffered."

Then I went on trying to take her mind away from the thought I had so rudely forced back on her. How I longed at that moment to take her in my arms.

CHAPTER VI

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

OUTSIDE the sun glared and the heat vibrated almost visibly across the air. All created things were clammily repulsive to one another; the pavements shrank in disgust from the vibrating feet that pressed them; horses loathed their harness; the very bricks of the houses would have spat at one another had they been able. A touch was torture, whether to man or beast or inanimate thing. Since dawn it had been so, for it was summer in its first vigour of youth, and the sun, frenzied, passion-ridden, caressed the unwilling city through the hours.

Heat came in at my window in great waves; it rose from the floor; it brooded from the ceiling. Lying limp on my couch, I seemed close packed as by some tangible thing.

Through the thin stuff of my dressing-gown, the couch under me had the feel of something ar-

tificially heated. The soft fabric grew sticky and clung to me irritatingly. I flung it off, and then found myself yet more discommoded by the scratching of the woolly couch against my skin.

Raising myself a little I was amazed at the length and whiteness of my body. I did not recollect ever before having looked at myself deliberately when naked. Whether it is the force of modesty, or climate, I do not know, that causes the hurried slipping from day clothes to night clothes, from night clothes into the tub, from the tub to the towels, and again into day clothes, with never more than a casual glance at that great white thing that is us.

I regarded my body in a leisurely and rather embarrassed way as if it had been a stranger's, and then touched it here and there curiously. I thrilled under my own hands with as much excitement and nearly as much shame as if they had been another's, and it seemed to me for the moment not at all unnatural that I should feel it almost immoral to lie alone in my own room and look at my own nakedness.

I moved my legs and arms slowly with a child-

ish pleasure in their tractability, and then crooked my knees so that as I lay on my back I could see my toes and watch their helpless wriggling, like new-born blind animals. I have always disliked toes and somewhat shuddered at the thought that I possessed them, but in my simple mood I took a certain pride in them, so small, so useless and seemingly rejoicing in a stupid way at their freedom from constriction and at the notice they were attracting from their mistress.

I pictured them freed from my foot and able to wriggle about on the couch and play together; I named them and chose my favourites, and antipathies. I disliked the great toes I remember, and felt a pitying affection for the next to the littlest.

It was all, of course, very absurd, and gradually I drifted off to sleep and dreamed; dreamed that I was lying, still naked, on the grass, soft innocent grass of June. I had never felt grass against my body before, nor the sun on it. I thought of Stevenson's letter to somebody from the South Pacific, in which he told how he was sunburned from head to heels except for "the

aristocratic portion of my person on which I sit," and chucked a dream laugh at the absurdity of sunburning a big blister on my stomach, and wondered whether it would not make the wearing of a corset next day most torturing.

Then suddenly I spied approaching the figure of a man. It seemed to be someone I knew, but dream-wise I contented myself with the resemblance and did not try to place the man by name. In a panic at the unconventionality of my position, I jumped up and rushed across the fields, with this man after me. I ran wildly, leaping ditches and stumbling, with him so near behind that I could hear his steps. That such a chase was most inconsiderate of him did not occur to me. Dream ethics seemed to make it a manifestation of the extremest gallantry and, though I was in duty bound to run, I do not think I greatly feared to be caught.

The story of Eve and her leaf-apron darted into my mind and I wondered if I could make one too, but realised that such a task would take time and that I was now a bare few seconds ahead of my pursuer. Then I saw a brook, turned my

course and plunged into it, seeking the deepest part so that I was covered nearly to the shoulders. The cold of it, dream-cold though it was, woke me with a start, just as the man plunged in after me and, bending over, kissed my shoulder.

I woke in perspiration, scratched by the couch-cover and discontented, lay a moment wondering how the dream story ended. Then I roused myself to go to my bath. As I got to my feet, I staggered from the sudden movement in the dull air, reeled and sank back, watching the room grow dark and larger and then gradually come near to me again. I was not frightened, for such a sensation is common to me in extreme heat, but slipped into my dressing-gown and walked cautiously and with careful holding of the furniture to my dressing-table to look at myself. My face appeared large and white, and more pleasing to me than usual. There seemed a dignity and passion in the eyes and a certain sombre attraction in the paleness and the damp, close darkness of the hair.

Lazily, I put a scarf over my head, a thing of beautiful rose colour, and then, moved in a fem-

inine fashion by the association of ideas, I commenced to wonder how I should like to be an oriental, a woman purely female, freed of all burdens of thought and soul — just a body. That would be charming, at least while one was young — but how about being a middle-aged, discarded oriental? I shuddered at the idea. If only one might cheat Providence and pass the first half of one's life in Turkey and the last half in New York!

I wondered if I should ever marry, or if I should pass my lifetime until fifty or sixty, or whenever death came, in the ridiculous innocence of a young girl, in that absurd state, virginity grown grey?

What else was there. To take a lover — very easy to say, but how did one manage those things? I imagined the feelings of a man to whom I was practically fiancée, were I to suggest such a thing. One or two men had asked for me, it is true, without mentioning marriage, but they had been such worms. One was fat and elderly and a divorcé, and had put his proposal in a most disgusting fashion. It seemed to me that it must be

expected that no attractive man would ever wish to be my lover. A man to whom I would be ready to give myself, and a man who had feelings for me of sufficient depth to warrant such a gift, would surely not ask it of me or be ready to accept, if I offered it. It would be a selfishness that could not go with real love, even merely physical love.

And then, even if *he* were willing, should I be? It is easy to think unconventional things, but had I the courage to do them — to face contempt if the escapade became known, to face the possibility of having a child, that invariable fictional accompaniment to illicit love.

"It is all very well to sow wild oats," a free-spoken woman once said to me, "but you don't want to sow wild babies!"

"Why didn't God give me enough intelligence to be different from other women without suffering for it," said I, "or else less intelligence so that I don't suffer for not being like them?"

Still thinking, I went mechanically to my bath, and, in the physical pleasure of it, the crisis of discomfort slipped away. There was first the

feel of the warm water, and then the caress of the cold, then the slow, soft pressure of towels, then the touch of freshly-ironed muslin, the scent of violet water, and finally the yielding pressure of smooth loose silk and the sheen of its colour reflected in the glass. Gradually I found myself again in the mood to pet myself, to consider my body first, my mind and my soul not at all.

Full of an infinite content, I carried cushions and a rug to the flat roof, made a little camp for myself in the breathless twilight and watched, as I lay, the smoke from my cigarette mount into the still air in a little column that was as straight as the cigarette itself.

Gradually I began to feel lonely, and to wonder whose company I would ask for, if I could have my wish. Not that of any woman I knew, nor that of Gordon, for I felt that the heat and the evening would work upon his coldness and that he would surely trouble me with emotional talk and yearnings. I did not want to be yearned over; I do not know what I did want — something easy, unthinking, sympathetic. I leaned back on my pillows and looked at the newly-ar-

riving stars, slowly taking their places in the old patterns overhead. Was it the stars that twinkled and the planets that didn't, or the other way around, I wondered sleepily, with eyes half shut. Forthwith I must have slid gradually into something near sleep, for it was with a tremendous start that I stirred and saw Larry looking down on me curiously.

"I thought you'd probably be up here," said he. I shared my cushions with him.

Here, I realised, was what I had wanted, someone who understood, someone who would not worry me with emotionalism, nor bore me by the lack of it. I looked at his face in the dim light and found it familiar, suggesting some other face I had seen that day — the dream-face of the man in the meadow. I laughed and could not tell Larry the reason why.

With half my cushions left I was not comfortable and resented it. "Nature," said Oscar Wilde once, "is so uncomfortable. Grass is hard and lumpy and damp, full of dreadful black insects. Why, even Morris's poorest workman could make you a more comfortable seat than the

whole of Nature can." I thought of this remark and reflected on its truth as I leaned on one elbow in the attitude of a Roman dinner guest. To be sure the flat roof of a New York apartment house is not strictly the unaided work of Nature, yet to sit on the roof of an evening smacks surely of the simple life, and, unpillowed as I was, I shared Wilde's preference for the artificial products of the furniture maker and passed on my complaint to Larry.

Lazily he cast about for a remedy, and found one in taking all the cushions and inviting me to lean against his arm. I may have fallen asleep there with my head in the crook of his elbow, for we talked sparingly. Once I found his hand on my hair, and again, I think, his lips on my forehead. I was as pliant and yielding as a pet animal and as little conscious of wrong. Sometimes we talked, but there seemed nothing particular that required saying, and I, at any rate, was not in the mood to search my mind for conversation.

My mind, indeed, had closed its doors and put up the shutters for the night; and so too my conscience. I had a certain placid instinct left, which

seemed to lead me to submission. I felt as characterless as a jelly — and gloried in it. I did not think it would have seemed to me strange had Larry fed me from his hand, and put a string around my neck and led me down stairs. I was, indeed, in my oriental mood.

And yet less than ever now that I was so near to him, did he seem a real person to me. Superstitious as a savage in my heart, I had regarded him — drifting into me one day and becoming in half an hour my friend without reserve, while scarcely even my acquaintance — as something very unreal, perhaps a thing of my own imagination, or perhaps a fairy-man. Certainly he never had been a normal creature such as one meets in Broadway or Fifth Avenue. Try as I would, I could not picture what his life was when he was away from me, or indeed that he had any other material life at all.

Yet again, at other times, he would seem realer to me and more of a force than any other human being I have ever known. And then it would seem that they were the fairy people and he the first and only real one of them all. It is so in

dreams sometimes. A person or a sensation seems more real than ever did anything in life, and yet, over it all, hangs a strange, sweet sickness and the conviction that it is not tangible, and cannot endure.

I wondered sometimes how I seemed to him; and in my saner moments I asked myself what sort of a man he was and what his life had been, and whether a half of what he said of himself was true.

From the roof we heard it strike midnight and he arose to go, giving me his hands to help me to my feet. As I rose I felt giddy again and clung to him. Perhaps it would have happened anyhow; as it was, it seemed inevitable that he should kiss me, flamboyantly it was indeed, that I should struggle to free myself, and that I should fail, and that then, unthinking and feeling only the innocent naturalness of it, I should cease to fight him and stand still in his arms.

But thought came back in the instant, and struck me in the face. I caught propriety by the coat-tails — it was indeed time. What was I doing in the arms of this almost stranger — a man

as unfamiliar to me in his antecedents, and history, and position as the symbolic car-conductor? For all I knew he might be a madman, or a criminal; might, half an hour from now, be arrested for murder or be making sport of me in his heart. No — this last, at any rate, I realised was unjust.

Yet I shuddered at the cheapness of what we had done. Neither of us cared or even pretended to, yet here we were in passionate embrace. It seemed vilely insincere, and I told Larry so, said we were too much fools, that he must never see me again.

"I knew you would say that," he replied. "We mustn't talk about this thing, child. It had to come; surely you felt it coming?"

I tried to say no, but I remembered the meadow of my dream and could not. "It might have been longer on the road," I protested.

"Ah! That would have been insincere. We have done what we wished, no more. If I'd kissed you out of boredom, it would have been cheap. But you know I wanted to, wanted to too much to think about it. And that you wanted to

have me so much that you didn't think about it either."

"So it was just pure animalism?" I queried spitefully.

"You're unkind to yourself when you say such things, child." He kissed my hand and went away. There seemed a gentle intention in the act, a wish, unthought perhaps, to make me feel high again in my own self respect.

Alone, among the pillows, under the stars, I pondered aimlessly. The incident had been a shock to me and stirred at once my senses and my brain. At one moment, I wished him back again; the thrill of his touch, the sympathy of it and the tenderness seemed cheap bought at any price which they could cost me. After all what did a dreary future hold out for me compared with one happy minute here and now? Was it not foolish to buy a putative Heaven at the price of a certain Earth? More foolish yet to consider an even less dependable Hell? It seemed so.

But what was I getting now? A minute or two of physical abandonment — the same, sev-

eral times repeated and without the disadvantage of a companion, was to be had in a dollar's worth of whisky, and was it not a pity to sacrifice this new friend in exchange for a slight bodily satisfaction? That it would undoubtedly be such a sacrifice I felt sure. Nature does not go backwards, except for that shell beastie — the crab, is it not? and he indeed goes sidewise. To-night we had kissed once; to-morrow it would be twice — but never again could we meet and touch hands alone. We must keep up this travesty of emotion till, irked by its artificiality, we grew bored and to hate one another. Friendship was over; we had nothing but fleeting animalism to take its place. I grew very angry and drove my elbows into the pillows, muttering inarticulate self-cursings.

And then, suddenly, I remembered Gordon, safe, considerate, gentle.

His coldness, and rather pathetic yearning and self-conscious love-making took on a new reminiscent dignity to me. He respected me; and never in his presence did I feel anything but unshaken respect for myself.

This wild man did not certainly tend to increase my store of self-esteem. He was very upsetting, a strange influence, and one in which I had slight confidence. Alone in the dark, I fancy I pursed my lips; my heart seemed to beat quite sincerely to a tune of prunes — and — prisms — prunes — and — prisms; and the great god of femininity — good-taste — shook a kid-covered finger at me and frowned.

She is not glorious, this goddess, and yet which one of us may ignore her? To each of us she wears a different aspect, but if I see her in a certain fashion, and yet perchance do not shape my acts to her guise, then, as surely as there are stars in heaven, I am laying up for myself a store of bitterness and self-despising. For in actual sin there is a dignity perhaps, and a grandeur, but in erring from good taste, as she sees it, there is to every woman an afterbreath horrid as the smell of onions.

Presently I fell asleep, waking maybe ten minutes later to view matters with the entirely new mind which even a sleep so short can give, and to decide that the contretemps had after all its

advantages. It was a long, dreary while since my heart had beat, since I had fallen asleep with any thought but one of boredom and foreboding for an uneventful morrow. Cynically contented, I slept again.

Again I woke; already it was to-morrow; the short night of the summer was ended; the stars had scattered, and the sky was lightening and drawing away. Shivering, I caught the rug around me and sought the bed of convention, for though Nature's night was over, man's lacked yet several hours of its end. Leaning against the door, I glanced back at the great Metropolitan tower, gilded ever so faintly by the dawn.

"And lo!" said I, mumbling with mingled cold and sleepiness,

> "the hunter of the East has caught
> "The Sultan's turret in a noose of light."

Omar and his creed found sympathy in my eyes that morning. With the music of his words in my ears, the unmorality of his tenets in my heart, I sought the stifling rooms below, and my bed.

CHAPTER VII

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

TOWARDS the end of June the days became noticeably hotter. Murky grey mornings, with a leaden covering of low hanging sky and heavy clouds of heated fog floating in from seaward, settled into sultry, enervating days, that made one languid and exhausted.

It was in such weather that I completed my book. That I was able to work at it hour after hour in a nearly untenantable heat, seemed to me a good omen. A piece of work that absorbed me so deeply, could not but interest others, I told myself. And when I made the final correction and looked at the completed manuscript, I found myself brimming over with a nearly hysterical joy. I felt that I had even exceeded my highest anticipation and now had not one single ray of regret for the profession that I gave up.

A week after I had taken my book to Mr. Gar-

vin, the editor who had bought my short story, a note came to me asking that I call at his office.

Full of expectancy I rushed over to see him. In my eagerness I lost all track of time and found upon my arrival that it was not yet nine o'clock and that I must wait until ten. In the hour that I sat in the outer waiting-room, I went over in my mind all that I had gone through for just this moment. Certainly they were going to buy my book for a serial. I would see my name indexed with others who were writers of reputation; announcement would be made that a novel dealing with the psychological development of man, would henceforth appear monthly in the magazine; all the days of dégout, of soul-weariness and resignation passed away in the instant, and I felt joyed beyond measure. Strangely enough not for a moment did my mind revert to the material side, to the money that I should receive; though I was nearly penniless. There seemed so much more to it — encouragement, recognition, future.

I was brought out of my dream by hearing my name called and in another moment I found my-

self talking to Mr. Garvin. He made me feel instantly at ease, being solicitous and kind.

"I've sent for you," I heard him say, "because I think there are one or two chapters of 'The Eye' that might be worked over into short story form for us. Of course," he went on bluntly, "this book of yours is not a serial. It has very little movement, no curtains, and yet there is stuff in it we like, remarkable stuff really, if it could be put into form.

"That little incident, for example, where your man throws over his job in the factory — if you could cut out most of the psychology and put in some human interest and one or two real live incidents it might make a capital short story. And there are one or two others," he said, running through the leaves of my manuscript.

"Why, what do you mean?" I begged as I realised he was undertaking to alter one of the episodes which I thought showed the intensest human feeling.

"Well, just this," he answered, "we can't use 'The Eye' as a whole. No magazine could. But if you care to take one of the chapters,

and alter it as I suggested, we'd be glad to go over it again, and we might use it if it satisfies us."

"Then that's its only chance?"

"I'm afraid so," he smiled, and before I knew, I was in the elevator with the manuscript under my arm.

As I emerged from the cool of the building the hot rays of the morning sun that poured down fiercely upon the stone pavements, and the heat radiating from the granite of the surrounding buildings came into my face like a hot blast from a furnace. For an instant I felt faint and weak. Then I remembered that in my ecstasy of the early morning, I had forgotten to breakfast.

I went into the first restaurant I came to, which happened to be one of Childs' places. "A cup of coffee, and some boiled eggs," I told the waitress, and I devoured them ravenously. I have heard that sorrow and disappointment have, at times, a stimulating effect upon the appetite. On this morning I bolted my food like a hungry dog, ordering yet another portion of eggs, and steak and potatoes.

I felt the encouragement that a full stomach will give one.

Sadly for me, however, it was short lived. As I put my hand into my pocket I realised that I had no money, having left my boarding place without a penny. Seeing my predicament I became bewildered, hardly knowing what excuse to offer, as my general appearance had by this time come to be none too prosperous looking.

Approaching the pay desk I determined somehow to inspire the cashier with confidence in my honesty.

Then I noticed that the young woman behind the desk had eyes that were big and sympathetic.

"I am very sorry," I said boldly enough, "but unfortunately I have left my home without a cent of money. I haven't anything I can leave to show my good faith, but if you will trust me I will return immediately."

"How much did you eat?" she asked me, and when I showed her my check she appeared surprised.

"You have eaten a good deal," she smiled. I suppose she meant that I had eaten a good deal for a man that was broke.

At this moment our conversation was cut short by the approach of the manager. In a few words she explained my predicament and it seemed to me that in a way she was pleading for me.

"Where do you work?" he asked, after a moment.

"Why, I —" (I came near saying I didn't work, only wrote) "I am a writer," I answered. And then I remembered the manuscript under my arm.

"See," I said, "here is a book that I am revising for one of the big magazines. It is worth more to me than a thousand of your breakfasts. I'll leave it as security."

Apparently he was convinced of my sincerity, for after a few words with the young woman, he told me that they would hold the manuscript as I suggested. I handed him the bundle and walked out through the door, stopping calmly on my way to take a few unnecessary toothpicks.

Surely and potently did I then begin to see what material value my months of labour represented. He had hesitated to trust me for less than a dollar in exchange for months of work. Momentarily I had a desire to rush to my room,

get the few cents and throw them malignantly into his face. Invariably during those weeks, where I met with refusal or disappointment, I remember that I became immediately possessed with an insatiable desire for revenge.

As I walked over to my room, I recalled what delectable sweetness lay in the few moments of encouragement I had found in the editor's waiting-room.

In the afternoon I returned to the restaurant.

"I've come for the manuscript, and here is your money," I said, as I counted out the change to her.

"Oh, yes, I remember, you are the writer that was in this morning. We were so sorry to have to doubt you, but you know that so many come in here, with one story or another, that we must just doubt everyone to keep on the safe side."

"That was all right," I answered, "I understand. You were very kind to accept the manuscript." (I never knew till months after, that she had guaranteed my breakfast to the manager.)

"You want your papers, don't you?" she

asked. "I think that's them," as she pointed to a parcel that lay by the side of the desk.

Bidding her good-bye I put the bundle under my arm and left the restaurant.

I carried the impression of her eyes and face with me to my room. The temptations that beset the path of the woman labourer of her looks, must be many, I thought. Surely beauty, such as hers, was a questionable treasure, should the owner, perchance, wish to live virtuously.

When I got home, I opened the bundle that I had brought with me. And there rolled out before my eyes, instead of my precious manuscript, a pair of worn trousers and some dirty linen.

I became frantic and bewildered. For a time I could hardly comprehend, standing before the clothes and staring in incredible surprise; my months of labour, a real part of me that could never be replaced — could I have lost it?

A swollen lump came into my throat and my heart pounded against my chest like the screw of a ship out of water. I believe that I aged years in that time. Everything appeared to be taken

from me, hope, encouragement and now even my labour.

I don't know how long I stood in front of the table, but at last I brought myself to realise that I must do something to trace my lost manuscript. I went back to the restaurant, running all the way.

When I approached the place, I was breathless and dishevelled, but I tore up to the desk, not stopping to think of the excitement I would create.

"Great God, girl!" I flung at the young woman. "You've lost my manuscript. Tell me, is it returned yet? And look what you gave me"—as I pointed to the laundry and the trousers.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry," she lamented as she noticed my delirious excitement, though at first she seemed too disconcerted to speak. "I laid them there before I went out for my hour, this afternoon."

Then we questioned the manager, but he had no knowledge of the affair, only surmising that

someone had laid his bundle down for a moment, perhaps to light a cigar — and then had picked up the wrong parcel.

My manuscript — the only copy I had — was lost. I comprehended it now to the fullest extent. And there seemed nothing to do. Out on the street again, I could hardly keep my feet. My spirit was broken, my heart empty, and again filled to the bursting with ironical sadness.

For the next few days I held out fairly well, finding solace in the fact that the book would probably be returned. Then, as I failed to hear from the manager of the restaurant, or from the girl Loutie, I became steeped in misery, and lost hope entirely.

It was, I think, the third day after my loss, that I passed the eating house, and went in. Loutie was at the desk, as pretty as ever, giving her soft smile of recognition to the customers as they passed out.

"Heard anything yet?" I asked her as I approached.

"Oh, how do you do," she greeted me, and her face seemed to light up. "No, not a thing, and

I'm terribly sorry. Tell me, how have you been?"

For an instant I found her searching my face, then she cried anxiously, "Why, how awful you look! Have you been sick?"

I answered by saying that, to tell the truth, I had worried a bit about the lost manuscript, as it represented quite a few months' work.

"Oh, how awful, how awful," she repeated, still looking at me as I went on. "Haven't you any money?"

"Yes," I answered, "quite enough for a time, anyhow."

Before I had fairly finished she interrupted, saying impatiently, "I don't believe it. If you had money you wouldn't worry so." Then she bent closer to me. "Now listen," she went on, "I feel that it was my fault that you lost those papers and you've got to let me ease my mind. If I hadn't laid them away so carelessly, everything would be all right. Yes, it's my fault and I'm going to make it right."

Whereupon the dear girl reached into her purse and drew out a five-dollar greenback. "Here,

you've got to take it," she insisted as I laughingly drew away. "It isn't much, I suppose, for all that writing, but it's something and you've got to take it."

"Why, Loutie," I answered, "I don't need the money. You don't understand. It isn't the money value of it, that I am mourning for — it's something more — that can't be replaced."

"Well, you're funny," she answered and ended up by saying that I should take the money, if for no other reason than easing her conscience. Poor, dear girl.

Leaving the restaurant I boarded the "L" at Twenty-third street and rode down to the Battery. I felt I must do something, and often before, when I was lonely, I had gone there and walked along the water's edge. It soothed me entirely, I found — to watch the rippling waters roll in and out among the piers.

Reaching the Battery, I paced slowly up and down one of the walks. The air had cooled considerably and a fresh breeze came in from the ocean, while myriads of lights began to spring up along the shore. It was quieting and restful

and as I tramped I grew sleepy. Indeed I had no sooner sat down on one of the park benches than I fell deep into slumber.

I must have slept soundly, for when I awakened it was dark. By my side, I noticed a young woman, hard featured and ugly — with a smudge of paint covering each cheek. I found her surveying me keenly for a moment, then she said brazenly, "What are you doing?"

At first my wits were hazy from the sleep. Then I answered what business that was of hers.

"Oh, nothing," she replied, "only — I thought if you had any money, you could come with me — for an hour or so. Ain't this awful weather we're having?"

I shall never forgive that downtrodden creature. In the instant she took me back to the world of troubles I had left momentarily.

The few dollars in my pockets were my last, my book was gone, I was a failure. We were broke, both of us, and look what poverty had made of her. "It won't be long before *I* am thieving," I said to myself, as I walked away from her.

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My mind leaped back to my former life. I was suddenly overwhelmed with all of the heart-ache of the past weeks. And then I did not pause nor even try to defy any longer. The fight in me seemed all taken away and in its place was left just the desire to get away from my own morbid unhappiness.

The hour's rest in the park left me in a quiet kind of stupor where I could see nothing but the embittering circumstances that kept pursuing me. The zest of living was gone. Before my mind came those morbid words of Maupassant that contain all the heart pain, the emptiness of life instilled into words of cold steel —

"Happy are they, whom life satisfies
Who can amuse themselves and be content,
. . . Who have not discovered, with a vast disgust,— that all things are weariness."

I entered the first liquor shop I came to and it seemed only a moment before I had five drinks of the rotten whisky down me.

The place was a sort of combination bar and wine room. Here and there were perhaps a dozen couples, denizens of the lower Battery

bending over their glasses in a sensuous partnership.

I drank three more drinks in the next half hour, but it seemed that I could get no effect from them. Perhaps it was that I was woefully in need of stimulus, but I remember now that although the terrible feeling of morbidness was somewhat blunted, still I had absolutely no feeling of intoxication — and my drinks had each been glassfuls.

It was while I sat over my last glass that my attention was attracted by someone at my elbow.

"Say, you," I heard in the coarse, rough language of the street, "take yes eyes offer me girl."

He was accusing me of flirting with something that might have been a twin sister of my bench companion of an hour before.

"I beg your pardon," I answered, "I have given the lady no attention whatever. I don't even know where you are sitting."

"Aw, come off wid yer guff," he thrust back at me, shoving his clenched fist in my face. "I'm warning you — if you don't cut it out I'll knock yer damned block off."

I could plainly see that the bully was trying to draw me into a fight.

It may have been the liquor, for ordinarily I would have ignored his taunt; but now there came to me an intense desire, like hunger — to plunge my fist into his face and see him bleed. It was the ending place of my months of pent up emotions and I suppose that I betrayed my feelings; for I saw his eyes rove quickly up and down. He probably noticed my thinned body and as I hesitated he became more brazen than ever, cursing me with foul, peccant words and then thrusting his fist into my mouth with a vicious shove.

In the instant I lost hold of myself. Jumping up from the table I aimed a wicked blow for his face which caught him fairly between the eyes. Then we met ferociously.

He was much stouter than I was, but drink-sodden and soft, and the advantage was with me I felt sure, for while my drinks had only served to inflame my lower passions, he had become intoxicated and his senses were blunted.

As my fist caught him I whipped another blow across, but this time he cleverly guarded it off

and rushed at me with an infuriated plunge. I meant to stop him with a blow in the same place, but he closed into a clinch and, before I knew, I was bent back over the table with his squeezing fingers at my throat.

For a second I lost all consciousness of my surroundings, of the crowd that had gathered round us. I only smelt his sotted breath in my face and felt that his fingers at my throat were slowly pushing out my eyes.

However it was this momentary lapse that keyed up my senses. Even as I yielded to his clutching, I brought my right fist over with a swinging blow and pounded the back of his head.

Finding that I had a free swing I drove home again, and again — and finally his grasp eased off at my throat just when I thought my last breath would have gone. To me it seemed that I was fighting in darkness, for his choking had brought a black clot to my vision that blinded me. Still I fought on wickedly, though for a time I barely knew what I was doing.

For an instant there came a lull in the battle and we were brought up face to face, glaring

with harm seeking eyes, gasping for lost breath. I saw with some satisfaction that his eyes were swollen nearly closed and his upper lip was lacerated and torn where I had pounded it against his teeth. Too, in that instant I realised that I must fight my way out, as all the onlookers were plainly his friends. To this day I believe the only reason they didn't take part was that certain love of fair play which lies dormant in even the lowest strata of human life. They saw that I was overmatched by this bully and were willing to let me win my way out, should I be able.

Men may stand up in the boxing ring calmly enough. They may ward off and parry the blows with all consummate cleverness, but once the animal passions are aroused and the hot feel of the other's blood wets the bare knuckles, then surely the mind goes racing back into its own raw birth — the beginning of aboriginal passion.

In a moment we were locked together again and fighting as wantonly as ever. Feeling his hot breath coming shorter and shorter, I determined to use every atom of my strength in one last effort. As we came close, I reached up my open

hand into his face and drove it back with all my power, using my left forearm as a wedge, at the back. Instinct warned me that I might break his neck in this manner, but I feared little at that moment, and cared less; I would stop him, and in this effort I centred all the energy of my being.

Slowly then, I perceived, the while his fingers were again buried in my throat, he gradually yielded; that his clutch became less and less evil. At last his fingers relaxed and he was at my mercy.

Before his friends could stop me, I rained a frenzied torrent of blows upon his face, his body.

Then he succumbed completely and sank down to the floor at my feet. I had whipped him. I felt the hot blood course through me like wild. Jumping over his body and knocking aside the others that had come to his aid, I tore from the place. Like a madman I was now — intoxicated with liquor, but more with fight and low viciousness. I had whipped him, with my own hands!

Hours after I found myself at a saloon bar, drinking again. In some manner I had managed to make my way further uptown. Caked blood

on my hands still reminded me of my fight, yet I kept on drinking.

One side of my half alive senses kept saying, "Stop, stop, you're going down." But all I could hear was my other self, mumbling dully, "I licked him. Twice as big, but I licked him — with my own hands."

As I was leaning over the beer covered bar and staring vacantly ahead of me, my drunken vision perceived an image that attracted, even frightened me. It was a gruesome sight of abject misery — a face that was ghostly white, pasty, bloated; with long furrows running down the sides of the mouth and appearing even to pull the eyes with them.

"Great Heavens," came from me, pityingly. "You look like a ghost," and leaning over the bar I extended my hands. The cold, smooth surface of a mirror stopped me. Good God, it was . . . . the image of my own misery that I saw. Then I realised what I had come to and broke down, crying like a child.

There came chasing through my senses a scattering recollection of what the day had been, but

everything that had happened seemed placed away in some remote niche of my brain, vague and indistinct. Soon a hot debilitating weakness rose up and encompassed me, I felt lost in a bewildering spectacle of myself being carried away; I knew that others were supporting me, that my legs were a hapless mass under me; my senses became blurred, at first seeming to settle back placidly into an oblivion, and then whirl away altogether. . . .

The rays of a morning sun awakened me as they filtered in through half shut blinds. Around me I saw and recognised the belongings of my own room — but everything strewn and scattered in great confusion.

Gradually I perceived evidences of my terrible night. My hands and face were cut and bloody, my head bruised, and woeful looking discolourations darkened my throat.

For an instant I felt full of remorse, even self-disgust at my plight.

I stayed in bed until evening, and then could no longer harbour my lonely sadness. And the orgy of the night before appeared to have stead-

ied me, for now I could think of my loss more calmly.

I called up Cleodore on the telephone. "I have had a great misfortune, Cleodore," I said. "Please let me come to see you."

"Oh, my poor friend. Of course, come quickly," she answered.

When I was in her sitting-room, I told her.

She leaped to her feet and stood for a moment straight as a rod.

"Larry!" she cried. Then she came over to me and caught my arm in her hands. "It isn't — true."

I had not expected that she would be so moved by my loss. "Yes, it's true," I answered, and told her how I had lost it and that I thought my chances for finding it were very poor.

When I had finished I saw to my amazement that she was crying. I was inexpressibly touched.

"Why, Cleodore, do you care so much as that?"

She wiped her eyes and answered a little chokily, "Of course, I do. It's heartbreaking."

"Well, I'm through, anyway — with every-

thing," I said, "I've reached the end of the road."

She thought for a moment; then rose from her chair and came over to where I was standing. "But you're not going to give up," she said decisively, with the impulsive determination that only women possess. "You can't give up. One never gets revenge on ill luck by giving in to it. Now, promise, you won't stop, you won't give in, will you?"

"Well, you couldn't blame me if I did. What on earth have I left? I haven't the money to go on and even if I had, I could never hit it as I did in 'The Eye.' Why, Cleodore, when I read that book over before taking it to Mr. Garvin, it seemed to me — well it seemed to me good."

"Yes, I understand. Of course it is impossible to do over a thing like that. There is only one way of consoling yourself, that is to think you have received all that was worth while in the book by writing it." She laughed sadly. "That's pretty papery consolation, I expect."

"Well, it may be all right when one doesn't happen to be the loser."

"Which is all the more reason that you should view it in this manner. You are the one most vitally interested," she came back.

For a time I tried to throw off my mood. Her sympathy cheered me wonderfully and, before I knew, we were really deep in the midst of other thoughts.

Often when a man and woman are rushing carelessly into the delirium of a passionate association, the two will find it most difficult to give voice to their feelings or throw out the slightest clue to their nearly self-consuming thoughts. Though each may be nearly equally cognisant of the potent force that brings them together, nevertheless will they squirm restlessly under the fear of betraying their feelings. Of a sudden, however, they find themselves in the midst of their innermost sentiments, voicing their cherished thoughts as nonchalantly as though neither of them were concerned. In such a position as this, we discovered ourselves that night.

"Have you ever had much influence on men?" I asked her.

"Why do you ask that?"

As I looked at her I thought over how really indifferently I was viewing my loss, and I could not deny that I had entered on the spirit only after we were together.

"I just want to know," I went on, "because you have influence over me, and it's the first time in my life that I haven't hated to have the sympathy of a woman. I feel so comfortable near you. Maybe you've had men say this to you before, but I know I've never said it to anyone. Since I've known you, it's the first time in my life I have felt the sensation of being alone at night." Then I caught myself. "I guess that sounds rough, doesn't it? But I don't know very well how to word what I think. Please understand that, won't you? Understand that it comes from a man that doesn't see a different woman each night."

She seemed silent after my words and sat quietly near the window, her face turned away from me. I began to fear she had not understood my honesty. But after a moment she turned directly toward me. The light from the candles reflected on her smooth hair, and there

seemed a kind of phosphorescence in her eyes.

"I don't believe I quite understand what you mean," she said in a very low voice. "I haven't known very many men — that is, in this way."

I found myself wondering at the change she had worked in me. I couldn't help but look steadily into her eyes, while my wits were being dulled by the happiness I felt whenever I was near her. I could see what our companionship was leading to even at that time. As I remember, it seemed that her whole body had come to be a part of me — and both of us growing less and less resisting.

From the time I had first seen Cleodore, an indefinable something had appealed to me. I had asked myself a thousand times the question: "What is this feeling?" Surely I had seen beautiful women before, I had listened to clever wit, I had looked into eyes that were more sensuous than hers.

Perhaps it was a creation of my own mind. Cynics have said that a certain beauty of contour and a few soft spoken words, that find blending within the man's thought, are all that is necessary

— that as soon as this blending takes places, the man is deluded by his own impression. This may be true, but I have never yet believed it and been able to think of her at the same instant. If there is truth in this, then love is simply the raising of another to the standard where we have placed our ideal.

"I've had a funny, lonely life," I ruminated. "I wonder if this harmony in life that so many people talk about, is anything like 'the milk of human kindness?' I've never found anything like this; for me it's been mostly bitter curd."

"Yes, I suppose you have been lonely," she answered. "You're so different. I have always got on pretty well with people, but then I am an ordinary kind of person. I always have been. You must have been a funny little boy."

"I guess I was," I answered. "I had few playmates and found no pleasure with them. I've always wanted something more, but never knew what it was. And, as I became older, I feared to have companions, thinking they would not understand me."

"That is a pity. Friends matter so much. I

left all mine in Rome. Now that I think of it, I don't believe I know a woman in New York that I could talk to about anything but shop. Human relationship," she went on, "is so wonderful. The relation between two women can be beautiful, though most women don't know it. And the relation between a man and a woman might be glorious. But I don't suppose it ever is, do you?"

"I've never seen a really happily married couple."

"Nor I," said she. "Companionship, that is to be prolonged, ought to be free. It could be such a charming, sacred thing, to have someone who understood and who was kind and who made one realise the romance of life all the time. But how could it be like this when they *had* to live together, and knew it every minute? It's turning a romance into an institution, isn't it?"

"Beautiful sentiment, but very difficult to apply," I emphasised. "The laws of the universe would have to be changed, for it is very seldom that an ideal union is brought about. Now-a-days there is a material thought of gain on one side or the other, in all married unions."

"Oh, I suppose you are right, and then they are so dreadfully monotonous. It's that monotony I am fighting against. It's what every woman fights against. Monotony, that's it. And if you interviewed ninety women out of a hundred who are living luxuriously from their husband's earnings and in return are only expected to be good housekeepers and mothers, you would hear tales of terrible loneliness, of willingness to commit a crime, even, to disturb the galling inertia of one day falling after another with only its 'duties' as diversion.

"I can't know this from experience," she went on, "but I have watched people and I can see that your sex don't understand. Women are like cigarettes to you. You light us, use us a little, and then we're dead forever, and the only joy we must find is in the short time we are being smoked."

"Oh, you're very bitter in your views of life," I interrupted, as I saw her face settling into the saddened lines that I had noticed before. "I don't see why women should look so tragically at the future. God knows of the nights *I* have sat

in my room, counting over my previous ambitions and their futile endings. We are only products of a natural law," I went on, "and we age and go like all other living things.

"After all, God is indeed kind to us. We are warned of the inevitable as soon as we have any understanding of life. In no other game is the chance so fair. All we need do is to store up for the end — and when the end comes, know that we deserved to die. How awful it would be to die and not deserve to," I broke off, whimsically. "Just think, to die and not a vice for the tombstone to cover."

"Oh, your delightful cosmic view of life sounds so cheap and artificial," she replied, with a frown, turning from me and walking towards the window — as if to leave me alone with my cynical optimism. Then she halted and faced me. "But you are right, after all. Life is a fiendish affair. Whatever you do you're bound to be sorry."

She would have had still more to say, had I not gone over to her and placed my hand over her lips. "You're getting a year older every minute, talking so," I said playfully. "Come, we're being

too serious. Why," I added philosophically, "it's no use to take life so seriously. The past is always gone and the hardest thing in the world to find is yesterday's news."

"Ah, I salute thy wisdom, O master mind," she remarked with a low salaam to the floor.

At that moment she looked so deliciously pretty and her words came so sweetly that I could not resist putting my arms about her and kissing her. It wasn't the first time. (I remembered our little party on the roof.) But each time I found that it was more difficult to let go, that I wanted more and more of her.

For an instant she yielded to my pressure, then she struggled out of my grasp.

"Why do you do that?" I asked.

"What?"

"Why, tear away from me like that. You understand, don't you?" I begged.

"Oh, I understand," she replied, "but don't you see it's foolish?"

"But how is it foolish since we know that our feeling is true? We've talked that over, haven't we? You're calling it the wrong name," I went

on warmly. "It's not that we are being foolish, it is fear you feel. Fear is like the Devil — always haunting about and casting his shadow on the delicious things of life. You might let me put my arms around you, anyway."

"You can create pretty figures," she smiled elusively, and tried to change the subject.

I came back instantly, apparently not noticing her words. "I don't believe you have the courage of your own convictions."

"Oh, you think that, do you?" she asked, and I felt her hand in mine. "Well, dear man, you're wrong again. It *is* fear, but of a peculiar kind. It's the fear that I would have to lose a happiness after I had discovered it. Can't you see? Women must have a different viewpoint than men."

Then she drew nearer to me, her words splendid with mingling sincerity and passion.

"Larry, since I have had understanding enough to appreciate life, I have understood how few get real living from their existence. Though we've known each other such a short time, and you are so impulsive, still I haven't combated you, I have

even given in to you easily. And you have forgotten to give me any credit for thought in the matter. I am only just so much material to you, that needs a certain line of battle before I surrender. You see me as one of a sex; just a thing to be worked upon. Oh, you men are so ignorant concerning us.

"You don't give us credit for having the same desires, the same yearning for real feeling and real life. Even if you did think this of us, I suppose you would then fear for our morals!"

Tears were filling her eyes now, but I let her go on, enraptured by her frankness. "Please, Larry, understand — won't you?" she begged. "You're making it very hard for me — just now."

Instantly I saw a meaning in her words. I wondered if there were another. "There isn't someone else, is there?" I asked impulsively.

For a time she buried her face in her hand, sobbing gently. At last she looked up. "Yes, that's it," she replied. "There — is — someone else."

"Good Heavens! You have promised — that you would marry — someone else!"

"No, I haven't — yet," she answered, "but I fear I shall. I have kept him waiting for his answer for months."

Then she appeared to break down completely. "Oh, Larry," she cried, her cheeks wet with tears, "I don't know — what to do. You have taken away all my ability to reason."

I followed her to the window and took her in my arms again almost brutally, and though she had revealed her innermost secret to me, I pressed her close and held her sobbing body tightly to mine.

"Then I don't care," I cried hoarsely. "Whoever he is, he hasn't got you yet," and mentally I resolved never to lose her. At that instant her value to me seemed to increase a thousand fold.

For a moment I saw what appeared to be utter yielding in her eyes while her lips quivered nervously, but soon she tore away from me.

"Won't you ever let me touch you, now?" I begged.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "how selfish and reckless you are. I have told you everything and yet you won't understand." Then she slipped into my

arms again, seeming to give way utterly, running her fingers through my hair the while her lips sought mine. "Larry, child, please, please . . . help me," she murmured. Then the tears gathered, and she buried her face shamedly in my arms, the while I felt great tremors like one electric shock after another, run through the body close to mine.

"Cleodore," I pleaded in answer, "I don't care who the other is or how much he cares for you. I want you. I know you realise what sort of life I have gone through—" then I hesitated, for in that instant a new realisation came to me as I heard her say:

"I am so sorry, Larry, really I am. I wish I could explain."

Her words came sinister to my ears. It was just what I had feared. "Cleodore, that's it," I said. "It's because you are sorry for me that you tell me this. You think I am weak, I suppose—or you're sorry for me because you realise the strangeness of being the first woman a man nearly thirty has had in his arms. I know that I have just awakened. I've been like a baby. I called

it being good until I woke up, until you woke me up. I know it. You're sorry for me. Oh, I felt it."

She rose gradually to her feet. I seemed to have hurt her. Should I tell her, I asked myself, what happiness had been mine at the very thought of being with her? Should I tell her again of the love I felt for her?

At that instant she raised her eyes and looked into mine so submissively that I perceived it instantly. It seemed that I could see the unsaid words — and as I searched, as one sees the awakening of dawn on the horizon I saw the truth, and with it came an understanding that sent the blood rampantly through my veins.

I took her in my arms and the glorious feel of her intoxicated me. Her half shut lids, hiding the passion in her eyes; the quivering lips that betrayed her unsaid thoughts and the soft supple arms about my neck near drove my senses from me.

In a way, her endearing words and non-resistance made me seem heartless, even cruel. But I suppose the passions have no intelligence, for I

drew her even closer to me and smothered her lips with kisses. Her lips and eyes awakened an intense desire in me, and I could not get enough of them.

Impetuously she pushed me away from her.

"Oh, you're cruel, Larry, to torture me so," she said. "And look how red I am — and my hair — Oh, we must not go through an orgie like this again. We both know how it is and still you make me suffer so. At least you should try to help me, instead of . . . making it so difficult."

Her begging argument bore home. To this day I believe that she would have given in then, had I not realised the brutality of it all.

"I must be a man," I said to myself, though even as I pushed her from me, I covered her forehead and eyes with my lips. "Girl, girl," I cried, "you are right, and I am a brute to make you suffer. I won't make it so hard for you again."

Her lips pressed mine in thanks, while her dear arms went about my neck. "I knew you would understand," she said.

Yes, I believe that I could have conquered at that time had I wanted. Sometimes I wonder if it was my own precociousness and ridiculous fear that held me back, but, after all, I am sure it was her very yielding that controlled me and was more forcible than any other argument. From that afternoon on, though the desire to have her never left me, still I fought it off incessantly and at the end was always victorious by a shade.

It seems strange for me to relate so dispassionately the story of our abasement. But it was really love, and I make no other excuse.

"This is being happy," I would say to myself, as I listened to her words and felt the warmth of her body close to mine. I know now that it was really happiness.

And I can still see her face before me as it was at that time, her eyes so passionate and yielding, her lips quivering — It all seems ages ago, but even now, a thousand times sweeter in the memory.

CHAPTER VIII

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

WHEN he had left me I lay tense in the twilight, crouched along the chair arm, my face pressed against the hot plush. Then slowly an inertia and relaxation came over me. I was very tired; my brain felt quite empty; all I wanted was quiet. Nothing seemed to exist and I floated in a pale, strange atmosphere — a sort of sea fog. My legs and arms were not my own; my hands moved incomprehensibly as if blown about; and my mind no more belonged to me than my body, but seemed to swing in mid-air amongst a crowd of dim thoughts and memories in which I took no part and had no interest.

The room darkened, and suddenly, chilled and alone, I woke into a terror.

I remembered. Sometimes one wakes in the morning, wakes out of some pleasant, silly dream to sudden melodramatic realisation of a misfor-

tune, sleep banished through the night. It was so that I came from my day dream. An instant before my mind was deep in some childish game of hide-and-seek; an instant later it was called upon, all unprepared, to deal with a crisis.

I was frightened. That night on the roof, I had felt merely a humorous self-reproach; now it was fear.

I looked from one side of the room to the other, as if some actual thing were there that threatened me. I could not understand.

Nothing had ever before shaken me out of myself; in all my life I had never lost my head. I had been foolish, stupid, impulsive — but never without realising it. My very indiscretions had been self-conscious.

Never, except in the delirium of sickness, had I spoken without knowing what I said; acted without knowing what I did.

But, now, what had I done? — and what had I said? I had no clear recollection, only knew that for half an hour I had forgotten myself, had lost all my self-control,— obeyed wordless dictates from some unknown master.

Suddenly I was exalted. I had always wished to act like this; to let myself go without thought of consequences or conventions. To have done so made me feel more real than ever before in my life. I seemed to have attained at last to an inner self that hitherto had eluded me; the cooped-up emotionalism of a lifetime had suddenly been unleashed.

There was really no reason to be afraid — none at all. I said this over to myself several times; and each time found it more untrue.

It was not all my own doing, this outburst; it was not merely stored up amourousness finding an outlet. Could I have behaved like this with Gordon?

Of course not, the sophist part of me replied. I had too great respect for Gordon's good opinion to make a fool of myself before him.

I reflected. Could I have behaved so with any ordinary attractive stranger? I shuddered at the idea. The sophist hung its head, there was no more to say.

I could not longer deny to myself that I had come upon something unique in my experience —

a thing stronger than myself. That this stronger thing should be a physical, sensual influence added the crowning terror.

How could I fight it? What could I do? I felt as pitifully weak as a blade of grass before a scythe. What good to it, or to me, to say "I will be strong"?

I had no longer any will of my own; I had neither the strength to fight, nor the strength to wish to. And there seemed nothing I could do, — nothing.

Suppose I should send Larry away? — send Larry away! "Oh Mr. scythe, will you kindly go somewhere else?" Much good that would do.

Suppose I should go away myself, should never see him again, feel the touch of his hands?

I could not.

It must be someone else who could save me. In my panic I did not consider what it was from which I sought safety. I think I feared no tangible misfortune, but only the loss of will power, the obsession of this influence. It was, because of its very indefiniteness, a greater terror than any other.

There was, I said, only one thing for me to do. I must get help from somewhere else, from someone who would protect me whether I liked it or no.

There was only Gordon.

Why had I not thought of him before? He was strong and kind. He would see me through this thing. It was an illness; a semi-insanity. He would take care of me.

I remember how we had parted in the autumn. Again patiently he had asked me to marry him, and again, I had been vague, uncertain, too kind to say "no," too kind to say "yes."

"I'll leave you," he said, "with me constantly about, always here when you need me, you don't realise that you do need me. But you do, dear. You're a silly creature, sweet as you are, and you need somebody to take care of you."

I laughed at this, I remember; and said that for a poor, silly creature I was rather inconsistently capable of making my own living and running my own affairs.

"Oh, that's different," said he; "you've sense enough of a sort, but you're a baby for all that;

and you need taking care of"— and then more seriously, "promise me, Cleo, that if ever you get into a hole you will send for me. I'll come to you, dear, no matter where I am."

Well, I was in a hole now, God knew.

With almost a single movement, I ran to my desk, wrote a telegram, and rang the call bell for a messenger.

And then, as peaceful as a child, I went to bed.

Next day we dined together. It was Gordon's first free moment, and indeed mine as well.

"I hate to see you living in a place like this," said Gordon, as he walked down the stairs of my flat house.

To me, too, the hall carpet looked very ragged, the spotted wall paper unusually greasy.

I had not been in a taxicab for months. I felt very much of a beggar maid.

"I can't think why you do it," my Cophetua went on.

"Did you never hear of the grinding heel of poverty, my friend?" I asked.

"But I thought you were doing so well at this work of yours?"

"I am," said I. But I'm trying to save money."

Gordon poked out his chin questioningly.

"Well, isn't it a wise thing for a wage earner to do?" I asked. "Suppose I should get ill, or lose my job?"

"Oh, Cleo, it sickens me to hear you talk like that. You living in a beastly garret, wearing Twenty-third street frocks, working yourself to a bone so as to be safe in case you lose your job! A woman like you — it's damnable!"

"It's facts, Gordon," said I.

"Not unalterable ones, dear."

We were at the Plaza. Gordon said he liked it because one met there fewer rancorous wanderers from the middle West than at other restaurants. I told him that he was personally aristocratic and theoretically socialistic.

"Your actions and your ideas don't hitch together, Gordon," I said. "You are as conventional as a wall paper tulip, in your heart, though you do talk Tolstoi and What's His Name, at your political meetings. I am afraid you are very inconsistent. Look how you admire sweet

feminine propriety, and yet you fall in love with me. But perhaps you are not in love with me any more — after the garret and the Twenty-third street frock?"

"I am afraid I am. You are my redeeming vice."

He leaned toward me and took the stem of my glass in his fingers — a quaint caress indeed. "Cleo," he said, "I am going to talk to you seriously as soon as we go out of here." And he did not press me to eat further.

I settled into the cab a little nervously. "What are you going to talk about?"

"You little devil!" he cried and tried to take hold of me. He had a hand on each of my elbows. I crushed myself back into the corner, his face was very near.

Neither of us said a word, but presently he let me go, leaned far back in his corner and said, "I beg your pardon, Cleo."

I straightened my hat.

At my door he said, "I am coming in with you if you don't mind. I want to talk. You need not be afraid."

My flat seemed at its worst. Clementine had cooked herself fish for supper and the bouquet of it hovered at the front door. But I do not think Gordon noticed.

He stood beside me in the little parlour. "What is the trouble, Cleo? You didn't use to be like this. You did not use to shrink away from me if I touched you."

I dropped into a chair.

"I don't know. I am tired and worried. I don't feel well."

"Poor little girl, you are not strong enough to take care of yourself."

"I suppose I am not."

"And won't you let me?"

"Oh, Gordon, don't start that now," I said plaintively.

He was wonderfully patient.

"All right, dear. But let me help you. Tell me what's wrong. Is it money?"

"Oh, no. I have over five hundred dollars in the bank."

He smiled; I suppose it did not seem a very big sum to him.

"Then, what is it?"

"I don't know. Honestly I don't. I'm just miserable, that's all. I feel tired and sad all the time, and there's nothing to take pleasure in, and so many, many horrid things. I'm so lonely. I wish I was dead."

He patted my hand. "My poor little Cleo. I wonder what is wrong?" Then after a pause, "I wonder if you would think me a sanctimonious old idiot if I said that it seems to me a pity you are not religious."

"I?" I was very much startled.

"Yes, dear. You need something stronger than yourself to depend on. You won't lean on people—"

"So, you think, failing you, I'd better lean on God?" I interrupted flippantly. His suggestion had upset me very much, frightened me a little. It seemed as if I must be in a very bad way indeed for a man of the world to recommend me to religion.

Gordon winced. "Women need religion," he said stolidly.

"That's a commonplace."

"Very likely. The fact is women need everything more than we do. That is a commonplace, too. But it's true. Commonplaces usually are."

"That's what Larry says," I interrupted thoughtlessly.

"Who's Larry?"

"Oh, a little author-man I know, who talks a tremendous lot of nonsense," I answered.

And that was the result of my attempt at confession! It was a fiasco I saw, this attempt of mine to suck in some strength from Gordon. What had I got from him? Half a dinner — he had been in too great a hurry to go beyond the salad — and a recommendation to take my troubles to God.

As he left me puzzled, grieved, in his way, as miserable as I was, I laughed. I couldn't help it as I saw how silly I had been. I felt weaker than ever. Unseen, Gordon might have been, as a memory, a certain protection from this infatuation. But when he touched me in the cab with hands that gave me goose flesh, I realised how foolish I had been to seek help in his material presence.

"It's like trying to build a roof of chocolate drops to keep off a thunder storm," I said to myself.

People talk often of lying awake all night, but I fancy it is really a rare enough experience. It has been at any rate rare to me. That night I came very near to it.

It was not yet midnight when I went to bed and I heard it strike one when I woke again suddenly. I lay on my side and reflected. "What can I do?" I asked myself. "I must decide. What am I to do?"

I seemed somehow to get outside myself and look down at the creature lying beneath me in the bed. I thought of her career — it went before me — year after year — a quick, frivolous procession — there seemed nothing in my life that mattered — nothing in me that mattered. Of what use was I? Or ever had been?

I saw myself at seventeen, very tickled because some callow youth had told me I was a "woman of the world." Ah, what chunks of life we thought we were seeing, we two, when he kissed my hand the night before we touched Naples.

He was going on to Colombo — his first appointment at some Civil Service job.

And the poet — that summer in Brittany. I was nearly nineteen then and had discovered there was more potency in innocence than in cynicism. Peter had to drape even the table-legs when he talked to me, I remembered. He had a dependent, invalid mother; it was the salvation of his illusions.

And then the Baron. I tried to reform him, I recollected; and he tried to seduce me. But nothing came of it either way. I was back at home then, in Rome and going on to twenty-one. He was fattish and unwholesome; I do not wonder that neither his design nor mine succeeded.

I ran through the list, a trumpery career, full of petty emotions magnified; farce acted in the manner of grand opera. I was sick with self-disgust.

In the space of five minutes or so I fell asleep and woke again. It was perhaps three o'clock, and a damp wind blew across my face. It was neither light nor dark outside. I looked through an atmosphere vividly pale at the house backs.

They were biscuit coloured with many black shuttered windows like eyes, and I thought of the beasts in "Revelations." From a chimney a thin wisp of smoke fell coiling before the windows to the ground. The eyes seemed all to look at me and to see me as just the mean thing I was; and when a light wind lifted the hair off my forehead I shivered and drew the blanket up to my chin. My mind opened and there came into it a procession of ugly thoughts. Each was a little twisted, sleep-distorted and deformed to greater melancholy. Then a heavy van passed quickly in front of the house and rattled loudly. I wondered if the driver and his horses saw horrid shapes as well.

It began to rain. A cat was crying out sadly, begging to be let in. I heard the sound of fog-whistles, sighing, and a church-bell. Another coil of smoke swept across the windows. Behind it came a thin veil of mist, pearly-grey, and cut by the rain. It was unbearably *triste*.

I got up and made myself coffee; and then could not drink it. I wandered about the flat, dusted some ornaments, drew a check for the gas

bill, wrote a purposeless note, and tore it up, and finally went back to bed. The bed clothes had come loose from the foot and the window-shade flapped irritatingly. At last when others were waking, I fell asleep.

With my breakfast, there came a note by messenger. It was from Gordon: —

" My dear little girl, I have worried about you all night. You are not like yourself. I wonder if you realise how you have changed? I have just looked at some letters you wrote me, back two years ago when you were in Rome. Here is a little bit out of one: —' I wonder how you can take life seriously and worry about the pro-let-a-riat? I can't worry about anything. There's so much else to do.' And another: —' You know, Gordon, I sometimes think nobody but me has the least conception of what happiness is. I lie awake at night thinking how happy I am, and fall asleep and dream lovely things, and wake up with a chuckle. Nobody else is so crazily happy as I am in all the world.'

" When I read these, dear, I'm not ashamed to say I felt a lump in my throat. You have

changed so terribly. And you were meant for happiness, meant to live in the sunshine and wear pretty clothes and have heaps of friends as you had in those days. I can't bear to think of your grubbing away and so blue and lonely and tired looking.

"I promised you six months ago that I would not again ask you to marry me. Well, I am going to break my promise. I am going to make you consent. I am stronger than you are and there is no use your fighting me. So long as it was only I who needed you, I had no right to coerce you. Now that you need me, I mean you to have me, if I have to carry you off by force.

"Dearest, you know how much I care for you, and that, if I say this and do it (as I certainly shall), it is because I think it's right for you." —G. H.

As I read it, suddenly I gained courage. My mood of the night passed off. My self-disgust vanished. I had been behaving like an idiot— I saw it in a flash. Here I was yielding to a panic of fear because a little destitute semi-lunatic was making love to me. I was so utterly a

fool as to think myself incapable of taking care of myself or of fighting on my own account. I had only been able to see one refuge from this man, and that another, equally undesirable.

I poured myself a second cup of coffee. The trouble was plainly that I was over-tired and hysterical. I needed a rest. I needed a rest, and by Heaven I'd take it. And I would send these two men about their business, too — oh, I was determined!

I planted my feet firmly at each step as I made my way to my office. I felt a very Amazon, though I did not — for all my self-confidence — trust myself enough to delay. Before noon, I had arranged matters at the office so that I was free to sail Saturday for Europe. By two o'clock I had my passage booked.

Perhaps it was a silly thing to do. As it turned out it was at any rate very futile. But I meant well.

In my first childish cynicism I remember telling an old gentleman that I had discovered that good intentions were by themselves of no use. His reply — he was a wise old English poet — was that

good intentions did perhaps no tangible good, but that they made a lovely fragrance that blew up to Heaven and that the angels smelt it and were happy.

So I dare say I made the angels sniff with many smiles that day when I signed my check for the passage money.

And yet it was ignominious, for I was running away.

But what better, wiser thing can one do, who is too weak to dare remain?

CHAPTER IX

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

I CARRIED the feel of Cleodore to my room with me that night. It seemed as if I still had her arms about my neck, and her frightened, sweet face in front of mine.

"What a glorious thing woman is!" I said to myself as I sat, fearing to go to bed because I might lose in sleep the wonderful impression of her.

Again I ran my hands over her smooth brown hair, I looked at her blue eyes, the tender mouth pulled down at the corners by sadness; and then the warm suppleness of her body was again close to me.

During the night, I heard over and over her gentle voice with its queer, foreign accent. Her pleading, "Larry, Larry, child!" with its soft rolling of the R's was again in my ears.

I wondered if it was only I who was fortunate,

or if other men found women at once so tender, so passionate, and so sympathetic. Had my understanding of the opposite sex been saved for just this? I wondered then that a man could go until he was twenty-eight years old without the wonderful intoxication such as I had felt that evening for the first time.

I couldn't wait until I should see her again. The intervening of time seemed a cruel thing, when such ecstasy must pause. But I kept her close in my imagination and lived in my dream glory, happy and satisfied.

We had agreed upon spending Saturday in the country. I cursed myself now that I had let her set the time so far off. But she had insisted.

The next day, I spent the most of my time in wandering about the streets. This has always been a favourite pastime with me. I love to step into the lives of people, and watch their actions and listen to their everyday talk. In my earlier days I had done this idly, wandering about the streets, making acquaintances with all sorts of people and catching bird's eye views of their lives. Latterly, of course, I have found a certain use in

such observations, for it did not take me long to discover that it was of such real, simple people that I was best fitted to write.

It was about nine o'clock when I started. In the city this is the sordidest time of the whole day. Night with its glamour and the vitality of broad noon have their obvious interest. Even the early morning is romantic; if one chances to find himself in the streets about six or seven, he has a glow of distinction. He eyes his fellows and wonders who they are and how they come to be out so early. But at nine o'clock, it's all changed. The streets have already lost their freshness and not yet gained an atmosphere; the people are dull, dark-dressed and hurrying — petty clerks and stenographers. A glance classifies them all. There's no romance to pique one; no mysteries walk the streets at nine in the morning. There are no aimless wanderers, no lovers — only men and women making what speed they can to their day's work.

As I looked at the artificial eagerness of the men, and the tired resignation on the faces of the women, I felt a sudden catch at my heart to think

that my beautiful Cleodore was forced to be one of these. And through the streets as I wandered I carried the prick of this with me always.

Though the day seemed very long, yet New York is ever fascinating, if you put yourself in the way of it. It is the fascination of life denuded, bared of conventional regard for your fellow beings. I was drawn by the irresistible force, the trenchant life that so impels one. If you search here, life shows itself in its rawness, and unaccountably you are allured by it, you imagine yourself part of it; and you willingly touch elbows with crime, passion, mystery; wandering along the borderland on common ground with the devil.

I found many things that one could write about that day, though it was not so much what happened that would have made the good stories, as what didn't appear to happen. In one café that I went into, the women sat about me smiling, rapaciously happy, though I could see their hearts were aching — in another place were men gambling, with a year's living at stake, without a sign of unusual interest. If we could collect these lit-

tle tragedies of suppressed emotion, tear off these shallow masks of hypocritical joy, and give the story of what lies beneath, these would indeed be tales worth reading.

New York furnished a particularly interesting study at this time. There was a big political campaign on, and it seemed as if a charged atmosphere pervaded the city.

The campaign turned upon a question particularly vital to the man in the street, and political meetings were being held in every district of the city.

In Madison Square Garden, there was a big gathering, and I drifted into it. Many hundreds of men were pushing their way into the already crowded building and I fell in line with the mob. Inside the lurid glare of the lights cut through the tobacco-laden atmosphere.

At the far end, I saw on the platform many politicians. One after the other they got up and made short speeches, none of which interested me much.

I fell into talk with a plumber who sat alongside me.

"Who is that speaking now?" I asked him. There had just got up on the platform a speaker whose appearance and whose sharp, clear-cut tones and precision of manner drew my notice.

"Oh! he is a rich chap. I heard him yesterday. Somebody told me that he is interested in the labour problem, and that he gives up all his time to social work."

The speaker seemed to know the crowd thoroughly. About me, everyone followed his few words with an occasional "Good!" or "You're right!"

He was speaking about the contrasting power of money, as applied to the employer and employé. His voice rang out, clear and convincing, and he cleverly took advantage of the surroundings to prove his contention.

"Look about you," he cried. "You workmen, who put every nail in this building, who laid the mortar for every brick. Tell me, what do you get out of it? Barely enough to live on, and then they raise the price of food so that you can't even afford that.

"They have a foot race or a bicycle race in

this building and make thousands of dollars clear in one night. And you, who put your strength into building it, what interest do you get on your investment? Nothing, of course, we all know that."

He surely knew how to drive home an argument and he used a plainness of speech that everyone could understand.

He said that this was the time when only the rich had a right to live. "What pleasures have you?" he shouted. "If you care for sport or anything that the others get, can you enjoy them? — No, every avenue is closed to you.

"And this will never be remedied," he cried on, "until we all get together and force political power from those who can have it by right of sale. Do you think that the votes you cast in to the ballot-box give you a voice in the government? Why, of course not. The future of this city, the result of this campaign has been pledged long ago, if certain men in the machine get their hands near the wheels." Then he went on to show what social equality, open public books and a common division of profits between capitalist and employé

could bring about, painting a beautiful picture of prosperity and simple life, with the happy workman coming home from his work, and the wife, healthy and smiling, awaiting him in the doorway of their little cottage.

His argument bore home of course, the rapt attention and the way everyone hung upon his words showed that. It sent me home thinking.

I woke very early on Saturday morning, feeling strangely happy, and then realised this was the day when I was to see Cleodore. My mood was full of placid anticipation and I wondered if she looked forward with as much content to seeing me.

For the first time in years, I dabbled over my dressing and was irritated to find that I had no tie whose colour would blend with the shirt I wore. I went downstairs feeling hungry and happy. On my plate I found a note:—

"I wonder what you will think of me when I tell you that we must never see anything more of one another? What you will think is my punishment for being such a fool the other night. I am going away, going to London. I shall be gone before you get this. Think of me

kindly, or better yet not at all. I on my side, will do the same.— C."

I jumped up from the table and ran to the telephone.

"I want your mistress!" I said, as I recognised Clementine's voice.

"She is not here, monsieur. She left half an hour ago for Hoboken to take the steamship. She is going —"

But I cut her off.

With a taxicab to the tube, I figured I could just make it. And as I tore along, each minute seemed an hour.

Wrestling with porters, cabmen and minor officials, I gained the side of the pier, only to find the big steamer gliding out into the open water.

Racing along the edge of the pier I at last managed to gain a glimpse of her slight figure, leaning against the railing of the upper deck, away from the crowd. I began shouting, at the same time gesticulating wildly. But I could not make my voice heard above the din of a thousand others. She did not see me.

The boat gradually moved out into the open

bay, the noise of the brass band became less blatant, the farewell cheering of the passengers lining the deck rails faded into faint echoes, and I gave up hope.

Suddenly, I perceived another figure beside her on the little deck. He seemed to be talking earnestly to her; he took hold of her hand in both his. I believe that at that moment she noticed me, but she made me no sign.

My hands dropped dead at my side. What my eyes told me seemed unbelievable. And then in an instant they were lost in the haze of early morning.

Curiously enough in the midst of my anguish, one trifling idea worried me. I seemed to recognise the man who held her hands. At first I could not place him, and then I recollected — he was the man who spoke in Madison Square Garden.

I leaned weakly against a post until I saw the boat fade entirely from my gaze.

So this was the end of my dreams, I repeated to myself, and I remained looking out to sea until a pier workman interrupted me.

CHAPTER X

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

I FOUND a place on an upper deck where I could be alone, and stood watching the crowd. The melancholy which life at sea is bound to bring to those who have no part in the working of the ship, hung over me already.

We had cast loose, when suddenly Gordon touched my arm. He was breathless with hurrying.

"Why, what are you doing on the boat," I cried. "You're not coming?"

"Yes," he answered determinedly, "you didn't expect that I was going to let you go away from me like this, though it was a close shave catching the boat. I got your note not half an hour ago." Then he went on, relentless as a steam roller. "You know why I have come, too. Shall I stop, or go back with the pilot?"

I looked ahead of me, and saw — another determined face — Larry's — as ungallantly he

screwed between two women to the edge of the quay, and screamed *en route,* in hope that he would catch my ear. I leaned forward and looked at him; there hung about his eager face that atmosphere of unreality which always surrounds those we see stopping behind, or strange people who wave to us as we pass swiftly in a hurrying train. And yet somehow I felt a real pang. It was as if his hands had touched me only the instant before and then been taken away forever; the feel of them was still on mine, and the chill of the pressure removed, as if on a winter's day my coat had been snatched away from me. I was suddenly as forlorn as a lost dog in a crowded street.

I turned to Gordon who waited, his question unanswered. I did not answer it, but smiled vaguely and went below to my cabin. Before I had reached it, I found myself, to my amazement, in tears.

I am not a woman who cries often. Perhaps — I thought this as I caught sight of myself in the big mirror at the head of the stairway — this is because crying makes me so ugly. Or perhaps,

I reflected stupidly, I cry inartistically because I practise the art so seldom.

My cabin was at the very toes of the ship, for I had booked late and taken late comer's choice. Fortunately the maiden lady from Detroit, who was, so the agent said, to have shared it, was detained. As I peered into its gloomy confines I wondered where the other maiden would have put herself and her properties. The place seemed overflowing with my own. The bunk was the only open spot and I crawled into it and lay down with my hand propping up my head, so as to keep my hat brim clear of the pillow. I fancy I looked the embodiment of unæsthetic woe.

I heard a woman outside cry out, "Oh, girls, look at the cunning little washstand that lets down!"

I moaned. I hated her for being happy and commonplace. I hated the washstand because it roused her kittenish enthusiasm. I hated the boat, myself, Gordon; the universe. Why had I come on this absurd, purposeless, melancholy journey? What was there for me on this ship, or in London, or anywhere indeed?

In the place I had so stupidly deserted, there was perhaps a little happiness, short lived, indiscreet, but still happiness. And I, like a lunatic, had left it wantonly behind me. Very likely I should never find such a chance again. At twenty-three I had deliberately flung away my only little joy. Poor spindling thing, I had been cruel to it, and probably I should never have another, and I might live to be seventy. I began to subtract twenty-three from seventy, did the sum over and over before I could get the result and sobbed under my breath as I counted it on my fingers.

The stewardess came in. "Excuse me, miss," said she, "I didn't know there was anybody here. Do you begin to feel the motion?"

"Oh, no. I am only tired." I swung my legs out of the bunk. The cabin was too dark for her to see my face. "Can you get me something to brace me up a bit?"

"A cup of tea, miss?" she suggested.

"I believe a whisky and soda would do me more real good," I replied.

And it did. Life offers to us according to our several tastes three almost unfailing cures for

melancholy — religion, art, and strong drink.

"It's nearly lunch time," said the stewardess. "Is there anything more I can do for you, miss?"

I asked her to fix up a bath for me — perhaps a bath tub should be added as a fourth to the trinity I have numbered. At any rate, returning from it to my cabin, I found it in my heart to smile as I heard the woman next door cry out — "Say, listen, girls! Don't you think we ought to go get deck chairs? Aunt Mary told me that's just the first thing you ought to do after the boat starts."

My place at table was next to Gordon's. I had forgotten him till I saw him sitting there.

"So you did not go with the pilot?" I asked.

He laughed. It was evident he had not imagined that I ever intended to let him go. He looked at me as one might at some particularly complex mechanical toy. "No," said he with some appearance of satisfaction.

The man next to me on the other side asked me to hand him the wine list; and I managed to do the service for him in such a way as to break up my tête-à-tête with Gordon. Somehow I con-

veyed the impression that one couldn't really talk of intimate things where strangers could perhaps hear and where they were certainly free to interrupt with requests for the passing of wine-cards and the like.

Lunch over, I said I was going to my cabin to rest.

"Are you tired, or do you merely want to avoid me?" Gordon asked in a friendly tone.

"Both," I answered with a sigh.

"Poor little girl," he said. "I won't bother you. I'll fix up a deck chair in a nice place for you, and you shall not be troubled with me till you want me."

He chose me a book from the ship's library — something of Mrs. Humphry Ward's — and left me as solitary as anyone can be on deck of a liner in the crowded season. From time to time I saw him far off, but with eyes turned scrupulously away.

The next days were rough. I stopped in my cabin for forty hours or more, placid from pure weakness, weak from mental inertia more than from physical causes, for I am an average good

sailor. I kept no light and in the interior room the grey twilight of the day gave place almost imperceptibly to the deeper grey of night. I slept most of the time or else traced patterns on the wall with my forefinger or folded the edge of the sheet back and forth. I suppose I was very tired; and then too I seemed to have an obstinate shrinking from the light and air and companionship of the decks.

I might have been there in my cabin to the end of the voyage, but that on the third day out from New York, the lady next door and her companion succumbed to seasickness with the same noisy enthusiasm which they threw into the pursuit of other features of ship life. This lasted an hour or two, and then, somewhat recovered, they commenced to exchange symptoms and then finally to sing in invalidish but cheery tones. It was, I think, "Way Down upon the Suwanee River," and after ten minutes of it, I seemed suddenly to crave another atmosphere.

I have often wondered what it is that makes people talk of the delights of ocean travel. To my mind there is no condition less attractive —

constricted quarters and no escape from the society of irksome people but to shut one's self into a tiny cabin. Everywhere there is a ceaseless bustle of folks walking up and down; and a constant feeling of boredom in the air, an ever repeated, though maybe unspoken question: "What shall we do to kill time?" People who have nothing in common plunge into intimate friendships and love affairs from nothing but ennui; they overeat themselves because they have nothing else to do; they tramp the decks and sing songs in forced joviality.

"How is one to behave?" I asked myself as I settled into my steamer chair. If one declines to mingle with one's fellows, there's sure to come a time before long when one will feel pathetic and neglected and would give one's soul if only somebody would be sociable — and then it's too late; one is branded already with the mark "Snippy." On the other hand, if one is affable and approachable, before long one's life is not worth living — friendly, tiresome folk fall continually over one's feet and perch on the edge of one's steamer chair and come into one's cabin at

odd moments, till one can find privacy only in the bath-tub.

At this moment, however, I felt very lonely. I had been ill; I wanted someone to come up and ask how I was, and say I had been missed.

Nobody came.

Then presently upon the deck, I spied Gordon. He was standing alongside the chair of some woman; another woman was sitting on the foot support. He glanced my way and raised his cap; then presently with the second woman he started along down the deck. I fancied they were going to play shuffle-board.

It seemed to me I was being shamefully treated. Why didn't Gordon come up and speak to me? For all he knew I might be very ill. I felt at once furious and very pathetic. I would go back to my cabin again and stop there, even if the woman did sing negro melodies.

Then I heard Gordon's voice. "Are you better, dear?"

"Yes, thank you," said I.

"Would it bother you if I should sit beside you for a few moments?"

I said it would not. I meant that my voice should sound — if anything — resigned, or better yet expressionless. But Gordon with optimistic ears detected pique in it.

"Poor little girl," said he. "You've been lonely. Do you feel up to taking a little walk?"

It was twilight now, and the crowd had scattered to tidy its hair for dinner. From one end of the ship — I am never quite certain off-hand which end is back and which front — we watched the beginnings of the sunset.

He began to talk quite gently, saying that I needed him, and he me, and that I ought not to be so proud and independent, and did I not think I would be a lot happier with somebody to be fond of me and to be fond of. "It's that you need," said he. "There'll always be somebody to be fond of a woman like you; what you crave, though you don't know it, is someone you can care for. Now aren't you lonely, Cleo?"

I don't know how it is with most women and whether they can fix in their memories the exact moment when they yielded to a new point of view like this. Perhaps with other women it is not

a question of yielding, but only of joining in the chorus when for the first time their man says such things to them. But it was not like this with me. I was gradually battered into consent and that evening saw at last the end of my resistance. I did not say "yes," I merely ceased to say "no," and when I went back to my cabin that evening, I had a feeling in my heart that things were different between Gordon and me, that I was not going to be lonely any more, that all of my battles and uneasiness were over. It was like settling down into a warm bath, very comfortable — not very glorious. But then, who honestly prefers glory to comfort?

I could take satisfaction in the thought that I was making Gordon happy. He had seemed so incredulously ecstatic when he bade me good-night. I fell asleep in the glow of complacence; woke in it again next morning; lived in it for days.

It was the evening before our landing, and we sat on deck, my gloved hand in his under the rugs. It was wonderfully still after the tempestuous weeks which had preceded my sailing, it seemed

very desirably sweet and peaceful. The sea was nearly smooth enough to reflect the stars, the engines repeated Longfellow to themselves soothingly, most of the passengers were below packing. Never was Neptune so thoroughly a family man.

"Are you happy, Cleo?" said he.

I nodded.

"It'll always be like this for us," he went on, making a gesture of placidity with his free hand. "Peaceful and quiet. I don't think you'll regret it, do you, dear?"

"I don't know," I answered.

"Little wild woman!" laughed Gordon indulgently. "Sometimes you hate me for having captured you at last, don't you? But I'll tame the little savage till she's glad to eat out of my hand."

I shivered under the rug. He returned my hand quickly. "Why, Cleo, dear, you don't think I'm serious, do you? You don't suppose I would try to hold you, do you, or rob you of your freedom? I love your dear, funny, little eccentricities; and you shall be a savage as long as you like. But I know that it won't be for long. When we are married you will soon tame of

your own accord and be the sweetest little wife in the world."

"Why?" I asked in a friendlier mood.

"Because you are really womanly for all your queer notions and when you get a chance to settle a trifle, you will wish to be like other women instead of being unconventional and full of impracticable ideas."

"Oh, Gordon! What a superior person you are!" I cried and he caught my hand again under the rug.

"Nonsense. I am an ass or I'd never be so fond of such a troublesome creature as you are. You've led me the devil of a life the last years, Cleo."

I chuckled.

"And I propose to get even with you by clipping off a few of your notions as soon as I get you. I'll revenge myself by making a dear, conventional little matron of you. You shall keep house all day and be ready to kiss me when I come home in the evenings."

"Nothing else?" I asked. "It doesn't sound as if I'd be exactly overworked."

"Cleo, dear, did you never think you would like to have children?"

"Often," I answered. "But I have always thought that a woman ought not to be expected to have children and a husband both. So, if I have children, I think, I shall have to ask you to go and live elsewhere."

"You little devil!" he exclaimed.

"Is that what I get then for my domesticated sentiments? I am going to bed." I kicked off the rug and got to my feet.

"Dear, nobody can see. May I kiss you?"

In the saloon some of the passengers were sitting around the piano and a full chested, languorous woman was playing "Amoureuse" slowly. The lilt of it followed me down to my cabin.

"I wonder if I shall have twins?" I said to myself as I switched on the light. The thought seemed aggressively out of tune with the French waltz overhead.

The passion of it — cheap passion I dare say, but passion still — throbbed and the ship seemed to keep time to it. I put off the light again and

sat on the edge of my steamer trunk. I was in a mood that Gordon would have deplored.

I considered Gordon. Already he was trying to reform me. It was plain that the young woman sitting on my trunk was, in his eyes, but a rough sketch of what he meant his wife to be. I fancied that already he was commencing to jot down rules and regulations for the future conduct of the future Mrs. Hemingway. I foresaw that I was to be very much married, that the hideous syllables "Missis" would be branded not only into my body, but into my heart and mind as well.

Even now there was a shadow of domesticity across our courtship. When he touched me I thought of the price of eggs; his kisses smelled of house rent. I had no inherent objection to domesticity — rather the reverse. But from duty and commonplace things, I shrank. I would be domesticated in my own way and because it seemed to me good, but I would not be domesticated or anything else merely because it was expected of me.

"Amoureuse" no longer fitted my mood. It

was a sort of petticoated " Marseillaise " that the engines hummed as I put myself to bed.

In the morning Gordon told me he had had an inspiration. Instead of going up to London as I had planned, we would stop off in a dear little Yorkshire village where his old nurse had returned to spend her declining years. She had a cottage and he was sure she would find room for me while he stopped at the Inn. Perhaps she would take such a fancy to me as to consent to cross the ocean again when our time came to need a nurse.

I remained silent, but Gordon was too pleased with his idea to notice. He went on, enlarging on the quiet, charming holiday we should have, practically alone — just us two. It would be a foretaste of the sweet, peaceful solitude to come.

By now we were close off Plymouth, and through a thick, melancholy atmosphere, the prospect was repellant.

The tender came alongside and, still full of optimism, Gordon helped me aboard. It was the sweetest village in the world, he said, one inn, a church, a dozen houses — I would delight in its picturesqueness.

Suddenly, I noticed that my big portmanteau was not with me.

I cut Gordon short, insisting I would go search for it myself since, knowing my way to the cabin, I could save time.

My steward was full of apologies. He caught up the bag and was off at a run.

"We'll just make it, miss!" he cried.

"No, we won't," I answered. "I am not going to get off here after all."

"What, miss!" he exclaimed. "Not get off? But you'll lose your trunk. It's aboard the tender already."

"My God!" I muttered. "I'd sooner lose my trunk than my immortal soul!" and then aloud, "I'll go on to Cherbourg. Fetch in the bag again, please."

At first, I dared not leave my cabin and face Gordon's wrath. Then, through the stewardess, I learned there was no Gordon on board. At the last moment the gentleman had been seen trying to leave the tender, but it was too late. Willy-nilly, he had been carried on to Plymouth.

It was a shock. I did not know exactly how

I felt about it; perhaps my feelings resembled those which I realised when years before at school a teacher died and we all got an unexpected holiday.

Gordon I supposed would go on to London. I hardly fancied the Yorkshire village would attract him as things were. So I framed up a telegram, vaguely recounting why I had failed to rejoin him and asking that he meet me in Paris, not exactly lying about the incident that had parted us, but most assuredly not sticking to the spirit of the truth. The telegraph is indeed a kind friend to those who dare not speak truly and fear to tell lies.

As the day advanced, the sun broke through the clouds, and I stood on deck watching the Normandy cliffs rise up out of the mist. Alongside me, in the saloon, the ample pianist was playing "Amoureuse" again.

It was wonderful to see once more my beautiful France. I had not realised till now how great was my nostalgia. I forgot everything in the happiness of watching the cliffs come closer and

grow clear in the sunshine. I stood alone by the railing till we were in Cherbourg harbour.

It was twilight when we landed. My fellow voyagers exclaimed what a quaint town it was. I praised Heaven in silence for the touch of French paving beneath my feet and the sound of French voices again.

The train for Paris stood chuffing as it waited for us. "Just think, girls," cried the most enthusiastic of the band of Idaho school teachers, "*Paris* is only seven hours away!"

I echoed her — Paris and all it held were indeed woefully near. The train looked unattractive. A small, still voice said to me, "Why not stop here and dine comfortably and sleep in a bed and then go on to town by daylight? Fancy travelling seven hours in a little compartment with those Idahoans singing 'Way Down Upon The Suwanee River!'"

I looked about me. Two alert hotel porters detected the small, still voice nearly as quickly as I did myself and ran forward. On their caps were legends: "The Palais-Something and the

Grande Vue des Something else." I waved them off.

A little man in a green baize apron approached. "There is a small hotel, very as it should be, very quiet, no drunkenness, and where one eats well, about ten minutes off. Shall I show it to Madame?"

Who could resist? It sounded the very scenario of Paradise. The little man picked up my bag and we went off across the ankle-twisting cobbles, through the gloaming. I felt light-footed and unreal, and irresponsible as a young cat in the evening,—have ever you watched a young cat by twilight, seen its little, crazy rush about amongst the leaves, envied it, a humble, furry Pan?

I walked swift and high-headed, the little man padding along at my side.

"Madame has already visited Cherbourg?" he panted.

I said "yes," adding patronisingly, as strangers will, that it was a fine town.

"Yes, not bad," he replied, with the air of one quite as much a stranger as myself. "I am not

of Cherbourg, I come from St.-Valentine-les-Roses."

"St.-Valentine-les-Roses?" I repeated.

"Yes. Not bad, either, but small, very small, and not gay. There's not a light lit after nine o'clock. I worked at the inn, La Rose d'Or. There was more movement there, sometimes one was up till ten!"

We reached the hotel, small indeed, with a row of tin tables on a sort of terrace before the door, and a lank *garçon* picking his teeth patiently as he awaited trade. He fell upon me with enthusiasm, brought me the evening's paper, the menu, the wine list and a very excellent dinner. As I awaited the sweet omelette, there rumbled up an omnibus and stopped before the hotel. It was a sort of old-fashioned stage coach, swung on big springs, with seats outside above, and inside below. I looked at it with pleased curiosity.

"Berny, Anterre, St.-Valentine-les-Roses!" cried the driver, inclining an observant eye to my interest. "Madame would like to go to St.-Valentine-les-Roses?"

He pointed to me with his whip, the three sol-

diers and two gamins on top stared at me, three crêpe dressed women inside looked out, the name in gilt letters from the side of the omnibus beckoned me. "St.-Valentine-les-Roses!" It hypnotised me; there seemed a sort of conspiracy to draw me to it.

"St.-Valentine-les-Roses"— the name called to me like the sighing of violins, or the voice of a lover, or the sound of a little brook. I pictured it sitting demurely on the top of a hillock,— the words of the green baized porter returned to me.

The coach swung alluringly on its big springs, and I half rose in my chair. "Madame is coming?" said the driver.

"How far is it?" I asked.

"Where to?"

"To St.-Valentine-les-Roses." I stammered the name as a schoolgirl might hang over that of her first sweetheart.

"Eight kilometres, fifty sous inside, forty up-top," he answered.

"I will go," said I, "up-top."

The waiter returning found me half way up the ladder of the omnibus.

"But the omelette?" he protested, as he pocketed the money I dropped to him.

"I will eat it as I come back," said I.

It was thick night when we stumbled into St.-Valentine-les-Roses, and the houses were indeed quite dark except for the Inn, where a lamp burned inside the open door. They set me down with my bag on the edge of the road and drove away before the Innkeeper had made her leisurely progress toward me.

"Suppose," said I to myself, "she has no room, or doesn't fancy my looks!" It was almost an adventure..

"Good-evening, Madame," said she. "You wish to stop the night?"

"If it will not disarrange you," I replied in placatory tones.

"Not in the least. Madame has dined?" And then, with a great brass candle-stick held aloft, so that she seemed absurdly like a light-house, she preceded me upstairs and into a huge bedroom, large as an opera house, furnished with a curtained bed in which a ballet might have been danced without crowding.

"If Madame wants something she has only to ring," said the woman, and pointed to a giant bell pull. "Alphonse will bring up the portmanteau in an instant."

She left me, clumping in her wooden shoes, and I felt ludicrously small and out of place in the great room. It seemed no lodging for a slender maiden lady.

"One should have at least two husbands to deserve such a place as this," I said to myself. But I slept well in it nevertheless.

I woke slowly and luxuriously, trying to hold back the active process of the mind and to cling fast to sleep. Then gradually I realised the sounds from the street below, the sounds of simple humanity, the rattle of a cart, the yap of a little dog and the cry of some hoarse-voiced peasant woman mingling with the nicking of her goat.

I got up and looked out. It was sunny, a sort of rippling sunshine, tangible, real — you could smell it, touch it, taste it and praise God. It was a day indeed that bore God's signature; no work of some inferior imitator, no job work of a set of clumsy cherubs.

I saw St.-Valentine-les-Roses for the first time. It was perched on the side of a hill, one street, a double row of little houses with kinky, red roofs, a little church, the little inn — beyond that, who can describe a village? The essence of the place lies in its sweet modesty; it were as ungracious to insist on a catalogue of all it held as to tear off the dress from some pretty, young woman, so as to give an accurate account of her beauty. Or so it seemed to me in my mood of ultra-sentimental exaltation. I felt like a child who had come upon a fairy under a flower pot.

With an air which I tried to fancy was mechanical, I rang for coffee, for it seemed a desecration to consider breakfast in the midst of such a mood. It was like pulling out one's watch in the middle of "Tristan and Isolde."

Yet does the highest exaltation of mind ever come when one is not materially comfortable? I doubt it. It takes a madman indeed, to see nature with a poet's eye combined with an empty stomach; and so, drinking a cup of coffee, that was made by a Velasquez among cooks, I fell upon a mood of even more enthusiastic content;

and then went out to wander along the white French roads, in a soft sunshine that heated the little breeze to a just companionable temperature and brought out the sweet odour of the grass and field flowers.

The place seemed very real. It was impossible that the St.-Valentinians could spend much time in introspection. I fancied that to them my life with its little soul searchings and worries and moods would look a very silly one. Judged by their standards, what was I? Heaven knows. I did not follow up the thought, but only walked on slowly along the quiet road between the fields and the orchards and the windmills.

Presently I met a fat old woman with a white cap.

I saluted her, and her smile was so cheerful, that, all toothless, it seemed to flash like any chorus girl's.

"Madame is stopping at La Rose d'Or?" said she.

"Yes," I nodded. Already I was known, it seemed, as a distinguished visitor.

"And Madame pleases herself amongst us?"

I rolled my eyes, burst into a poetic flight about nature's beauties and the quiet of the country-side. It was, by intention, ill-mannered and pretentious in me, for I had no expectation that the old dame would understand, let alone sympathise.

But, thank God, life is full of surprise, and she answered, "Madame is right. We live indeed as people should here in St.-Valentine-les-Roses. We are not gay; you could not write a book about us, but we are very happy. If it were not for the looks, Madame, you could not tell us from our cows and chickens. God put us all down on the earth and said, 'continue and multiply'— and we others here at St.-Valentine, we do it — whether we are humans or cattle, or trees. And when one has many children and has to get food for them out of the ground, one has little time for sad thinking — hein, Madame?"

I do not know which is the more upsetting — to say something which one expects to have understood and to meet blank incomprehension, or talking to please one's self and expecting blankness, to run against perfect understanding.

At any rate the old lady put me off my stride.

I could only smile and say she was right, which indeed she certainly was. This world would be an infinitely pleasanter place if all of us were occupied in multiplying our species and feeding it, instead of busying ourselves largely with torturing reflections upon the futility of human life. But were we, my old white capped lady and I, to change the face of the earth, I asked myself? Things are as they are, and as Henry James made them.

I bade her good-morning, envying her for all her little, stubby body and her toothless mouth. Her life, and her neighbours' lives seemed so gloriously easy and satisfactory. Here in St.-Valentine-les-Roses generation after generation lived in simplicity and content, married and bore their children, tended the trees, plucked the fruits and made jam of them; milked the cows and turned their cream into cheese. Year after year, I reflected to myself, trees and cows and men had done their duty with never a thought they could do otherwise; and the human lives had been as natural as those of the beasts and as inevitable as the recurrence of the snow and the sunshine.

It may have been that day, or the next, or even the day after that, for I fell into a state of such unreflecting peace as not even to count the sunsets, that I spent a whole afternoon sitting against a haymow watching a small windmill as it patted the air, itself air-patted. Poor, stationary little ship, with its sails always moving and its prow never making progress — I felt childishly sorry for it. Yet it looked happy; and sympathy was as much wasted upon it, as upon the men and women who lived near its shadows. It was busy and stationary, and content like them to do unendingly the same things. It was all of a piece, the life of the St.-Valentine-les-Roses.

Sitting there, I wondered lazily if a young woman could make a living farming, and whether the remnants of my five hundred dollars would be sufficient to set me up with a cottage, and a goat, and a hoe and the other things farmers use.

But my plan had not time for fruition.

It began to rain. I found it so when I waked in the morning. It seemed to me that nature was deliberately deceiving me. I had relied upon the

sun shining day after day indefinitely; the possibility of a storm coming had never entered my head. I felt as astonished and aggrieved as I would have felt had the windmill left her moorings to come and slap me. I stood at the window and gazed at the perfidious village. The rain came down with determination, not very fast, but ploddingly. There were ruts in the white road, now turned grey; the trees were water-laden and the branches pulled down. Everything seemed very matter of fact and life looked to me wispy and out of curl.

"I suppose they have lots of days like this," I said to myself, and went back to bed. I would sleep some more, I thought. But I did not. Instead I began to think.

"What day of the week is it?" I asked Madame when she brought me my coffee.

She reflected a moment and answered, "Wednesday."

I repeated it after her. The coffee seemed much less good to me than usual. From my bed, I could see the grey rain falling slant-wise. The noise of its falling waked my conscience. I felt

the chill and the damp of the air; I shivered in body, and quaked in mind.

For four days I had lost myself in a dream of sunshine, and soft grass; the world had seemed very far away; and all the troubles of my former self a small affair indeed. But now I was cold, and frightened and thoroughly awake again.

"Three times fool that you are!" I cried to myself in the mirror and the sight of my blue nose did not move me to gentler self judgment. It is easy to be kind to oneself when the looking glass shows one at one's best. But she who has an ugly day cannot hope for a soft conscience.

"Fool," I repeated, "you have thrown away all you wanted in life for what — a few hours' sunshine, a few quarts of coffee, some sentimental burblings about nature."

I flung my clothes into my portmanteau, paid my bill to Madame and departed by the next diligence, leaving her to think me of all sane women the maddest — as indeed I perhaps am.

Inside three hours I was in the express for Paris, riding second-class. Indeed so ardent was my

wish for self-abasement that it is a wonder I did not go third.

Opposite me sat a woman with two little boys. I noticed them presently, saw how happy she looked and tried to fancy myself in her place. She smiled at me good-humouredly and suddenly I spoke to her.

"Tell me, Madame, is it pleasant being married?"

It was impertinent if you like, but I wanted to know and I fancied her to be one of those persons to whom one could say such things.

I was right, for her answer came spontaneous and unsurprised.

"It is my life," said she, "I have nothing else."

"You have no other interests?"

"Ah, Mademoiselle, do not think my life is small — I have to make one man happy, and to bring up two little ones to be as good men as he is. There is something sacred about making an omelette if one remembers always this."

I nodded. I thought what she said was true.

She glanced at my hands. "Mademoiselle should marry," said she, and added with gallic

amiability that my charms deserved a husband.

"Alas," said I in a burst of confidence — who has not had them in railroad trains? — "I wish I might marry, but I fear that I have hopelessly offended the man to whom I am fiancée."

"Nonsense, Mademoiselle," said she, "do not be afraid. He will forgive, if you let him see you are really sorry. Is he in Paris?"

I said he was so far as I knew.

"He expects you?"

"I telegraphed to him from Cherbourg."

"Ah, then, have no fear, Mademoiselle," said the woman cheerfully, and with the instinctive tact of her nation shifted the talk to other things.

On the station platform, Gordon stood waiting, looking glum indeed.

I said good-bye to Madame and the little boys.

"Do not be afraid to show your regret, Mademoiselle," whispered the good woman. "Can you weep? No?"

I walked towards him and thrust out my hands which he did not seem to see.

"You got my telegram?" I asked fatuously — for how else would he have been there?

He bowed. "Give me the tickets for your luggage and I will put you into a cab."

"Put me into a cab"— then he had no intention of driving me to my hotel. He had come to the station merely because it was late in the night and he could not permit any lady in whom he had interested himself to arrive unmet in Paris at that hour.

Presently with a porter and my luggage he rejoined me. Timidly I touched his arm. "Are you very angry, Gordon?" I asked.

"Need we discuss it?"

I sighed, and thought it would not be very hard to follow Madame's hint about the tears. I felt unspeakably forlorn. At the cab, he offered me his hand, to help me to the step, and then turned to give the address to the cabby.

"Gordon," I cried desperately. "Please come with me — please."

I had followed Madame's hint.

Gordon came.

As I lay in bed that night and remembered my

apology to him, how I had told him of having been nervous and overwrought, of being almost unconscious what I was doing for several days, and of how not only he, but I also for the moment, believed it, I chuckled cynically.

"Why use your brains and tell the truth," I questioned of the pillow, "when by lying and playing the abject ass, you can gain every end in life? — And this, O God, is what they call being womanly!"

The eye that sees life and oneself does not open often by daylight, and next morning I woke full of peace and content, dressed slowly and with the care one might give to fulfilling a sacred right — for was it not a worship of my lover and our love to make myself as attractive as possible? — went down to my *café au lait* in the courtyard of the hotel and soon was joined by Gordon who had a room in a place near by.

He looked so happy. I felt so happy. The sun shone, a street band played a jovial tune from Naples.

"Come," said I, "let us go out into the streets."

We walked along the Avenue de l'Opéra. I bought a pink veil, a bottle of scent, and half a dozen earthenware dishes. Gordon bought a bunch of roses and gave a beggar woman half a franc. He was not usually prodigal with money, counting it better to give it intelligently than to fling it to the supposed poor of the city who are very likely no more needy than he himself.

At the Palais Royal strangely enough we met Madame of the train with her children and the husband, a fattish man with a black beard and checked trousers.

She ran over to me. "Mademoiselle is happy?"

"Ah, yes!"

"Mademoiselle wept?" she questioned slyly.

I nodded.

"I have never known it fail," she said wisely, and let me lead off the two boys to the magasin du Louvre and buy a pair of elaborate toys, while Gordon sat at the corner café with her and her husband.

Three or four days later I went back to Cherbourg to take ship again for New York. I was,

or fancied myself, in a state of absolute contentment and all the worn sentimental sayings that had used to make me laugh seemed suddenly very true.

My heart babbled of a good man's love; of the beauty of homely virtues; of how a woman's finest sphere was in the home with her husband and her children. I was nearly capable of rhapsodising at the thought of becoming the subsequent mother of twins. I looked back on my older selves with amazement. Why had I been capricious, full of notions of independence and absurd wilfulness? Surely, I could not have supposed that was the way to find contentment. I looked back wild-eyed at my own past, but I was too sunk in buttery complacence to worry about it.

I had fallen in love with sloth and repose and convention and a peaceful conscience. There was no one to warn me that repose robbed me of other things, or to say "does it not clang in your ears 'you will never be a pirate?'"

Indeed, I should not have heeded the clanging. The world holds no more self-satisfied creature than the newly betrothed, or newly married woman. She has achieved her destiny, justified

her sex, and settled herself in life forever. She feels she has discovered the social system — nay created it, and that it is good.

Kissing Gordon good-bye at the Gare St.-Lazarre, there surged over me along with the sweet pathos of parting an assurance that now at last and for the first time I knew real happiness.

CHAPTER XI

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

"WHAT are you waiting for, sir?" the dock hand said to me.

I moved dully away from the post.

"Hey, there!" cried the man, "that ain't the way out! You'll walk off into the river, if you're not careful!"

I returned my steps and went back over the pier out to the street.

I understood everything now, perfidious Cleodore — her casual mention of the other man, the note she sent, too late for me to see them sail; her telling me that we must never see each other again.

I could see that I had been no more than a diversion for her. She had been playing with me.

"I've saved all my affection of twenty-eight years for this — to be made a fool of!" I said to myself. And I laughed.

Now they were together on the boat. The last glimpse I had was of his hand over hers. Doubtless they were both making fun of me. At that moment I wished — I had taken her.

I tramped upon the gang plank of the Twenty-third Street ferry, following the crowd like an automaton. Looking out over the bay I could still see the dim outlines of the big funnels, and into my mind's eye sprang a comparison between the smoke curling its way from out the huge smoke-stacks, and the days when Cleodore had been near me. Like the smoke evaporating in the air, so did all that had meaning to me seem to fade away in the instant.

Soon we reached the slips of the New York side. All the heart pang and distress of the previous weeks came back to me. At first I started to go with the crowd, then I slipped into one of the side benches, unable to hold back my emotions. I couldn't dare to consider what was in store for me once I set foot into New York again.

But at last I pulled myself together and turned my face to the crowd. With one last glance out into the bay, and a hot, swift throb of my heart

for all that was Cleodore, I went out through the dark, narrow passage.

Walking over to Broadway I found myself within a few steps of Loutie's place, and looking in at her door I saw that the girl was just putting on her hat.

"Oh, hello!" she said, "wait a minute." Then she joined me.

I smiled at her cheerfully. "Hello, Loutie! It's good to see you."

"Here too," she answered; "I've thought a good deal about you. Where have you been?"

Observing Loutie, as we walked on, I found her searching my face quizzically.

"What is the matter, child?" I cried. But even as I spoke, she interrupted me.

"Oh, you look so awful. You are still worrying about that manuscript, now aren't you?"

"Perhaps I am, a little," I replied. "But only a very little and anyway it is all past. I can't be a baby about it."

"Yes, I know, but it was all my fault and I can't ever forget that. I am so afraid it will dis-

courage you. You're looking like a tramp, nearly, now."

"You're exaggerating the situation, Loutie," I smiled. "You needn't worry. You don't know fighting as I do. It's only when we are down and out that the struggle becomes grim and then a desperate man can accomplish more in a minute than a genius could in a month."

Suddenly she interrupted me.

"Oh, you think I don't know, that I don't understand disappointment and trouble, because you always see me laughing and happy. But I do know and I know, too, that you can't throw off worry by simply saying 'It's all right, it's nothing.' No, you can't do it that way. At least you are not the sort that can.

"You think that because I am jollying one man after another back of the cash desk that I have no understanding. I've got to do that, of course, to hold my job, but there is another side and I'm no fool.

"And I've got feeling too. The other day I was reading one of Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poems and it just set me to crying. The boss called me

down for it, the fool. I am telling you this because I want you to understand that I've got a little feeling of what you're going through and that I am so sorry and want to do something for you and want you to know that I'll understand if you tell me.

"I could tell you a lot more. I used to know a lot of men who were always having moods and they said I cheered them up more than anyone else."

"Where did you know them, these men?" I asked.

"In a hospital," she answered. "You see I studied to be a nurse but had to give up after a few months and make some ready money."

Hearing the girl at my side talk of hospitals aroused my interest immediately.

I went on questioning her. "Did you like the work in a hospital?"

"Very much. It was so satisfactory. You can always get the best that's in people when they're sick."

"So you've noticed that?"

"Yes, indeed — often," she replied.

"I'm discovering something new every minute, Loutie," I exclaimed. "Now you're a student of the philosophy of life."

"Well, it may be what you say," she murmured, a little puzzled.

I kept her on the subject. "But when they get well, they forget, don't they?" Then I sighed—"Yes, Loutie, gratitude is the name of a peculiar bird that only stops long enough to be fed. You will learn this some day."

I found her laughing heartily at my soaring sentiments. But the next instant she was serious again. "Oh, it's like I thought— You don't give me credit for knowing anything. Why, I learnt what you just said long ago. That's why you always find me happy. We mustn't want to hear this gratitude in words and then pat ourselves on the back. The only way is to know that you've done right and good, and then be happy because you know it yourself."

I was astonished at her real philosophy. "I am sure that you have had some unhappiness in your life, Loutie, when you talk like that," I said. "How long have you been in New York?"

We walked on in silence for a time, then she answered —" Oh, since — well, I'd rather not talk about it."

" Why not? " I asked, surprised. " But perhaps it is something I shouldn't know."

" Oh, I can tell you. In fact I'm glad to. You're the first one I've met since I've come here who would understand. All the rest want me " — then she suddenly quieted into a choked silence. " You see, I am one of those, with a past," she finished off, airily.

" You are very young — to have had a past," I said. " Tell me, Loutie, I really want to know."

" Well, if you must," she consented reluctantly. " But it isn't anything unusual, except that it happened to me. I came from a little town in Massachusetts. They thought at home that I should learn to nurse, as they heard there was such good money in it, so I came on. I even had to lie about my age, I was only seventeen.

" Then they needed money at home and I quit, and went to work. Then I met him."

She paused.

"He was so big and kind to me, when I was so lonely. After a few months, we got married." She sighed resignedly.

"You were married!" I ejaculated.

"Yes, we got married, then. Oh, I was such a baby, too."

"But the end. Tell me, what was that? You're not married now, are you?"

"The end? Ah, boy, that took time. After the first few months I realised that he had no understanding of me. He was strong and willing to work for me and all that, but I could never talk to him. He was always petting me and calling me pet names and I got so that I couldn't stand to have him touch me.

"I can't explain it. Maybe I don't know enough about such things and I suppose I treated him mean but — oh, you understand, don't you?" She looked up at me. I thought I saw tears in her eyes.

After a moment, she resumed her story, though with seeming languor. "I held out as long as I could — then I told him. And you ought to have seen him then. He just broke down and

cried like a baby. He said I couldn't understand the love of a good man. I did feel terribly sorry but I didn't love him and — oh, it was awful and I just couldn't hold out any longer. We went to some lawyers and after a lot of time, they told me that I was divorced — and free."

For an instant her eyes dimmed, but she quickly controlled herself. "It was very hard, I had to earn my own living again. It seemed harder this time, though of course I couldn't expect anything from him. Still I wouldn't trade. When I was with him, it was like being in jail. Why, he wouldn't even let me have any girl friends, he was that jealous."

"What did he do, after you separated?" I asked.

"Oh, that was three years ago. I heard he married again. Maybe it's to some woman that don't understand him this time and I guess they're happy."

Being with Loutie seemed to quiet me and rest my nerves. I have thought of the comparison many times since — Loutie and Cleodore. They appeared to represent the strings of a harp.

Loutie, the soft, low tones that quieted me and gave me rest; dulcet sweetness that let me dream of other things, that let me spin my web unharassed; while Cleodore — but I couldn't help it. When I thought of her, my heart leapt, and my passions were aroused and I became like one who has just left the sensuous visioning of a lotus feast. She was life blood, energy and desire in me.

I tried to keep from thinking about Cleodore, however. She was out of my life entirely, and the sweet honesty of Loutie made the little shop girl appear like an angel beside the low calculating trickery of the woman who had left me that morning.

I kept the engagement I had made with Loutie for the following evening and met her at the uptown corner of Madison Square.

"We are to dine together, Loutie," I said as I greeted her.

"All right, boy," she answered caressingly. "Did you just leave your room? And how is your work coming on?"

To this she received no answer. I disliked talking "work" with Loutie. She understood so

little about it. We walked on in silence for a few moments when I saw a bright smile light her face.

"Oh, I have it," she said. "You are to come dine with me. I just got my three per."

In answer I smiled and shook my head.

"Oh, but you must. Why, I came near not thinking of it. You will, won't you?"

"My child," I answered gravely. "At least we haven't reached that state where you have to be the mainstay and support of the family. No, my dear, to-day we are to dine at some place where only the rich go, and you are the invited guest."

For an instant I considered. "Ah, I have it, Loutie. A wonderful little place down on Fourteenth Street. *Table d'hôte,* music, red wine, and all that, for fifty cents. Think of it. I don't see why we can't afford an extravagance of this sort, at least once in the week."

Then I jingled the few cents in my pocket. "Come, girl," said I, "we will celebrate my fiftieth birthday. I've used up all the rest."

We sought out a little table far back in one

corner. There we could observe the people about us and still be near enough to hear the music from a three-piece Hungarian orchestra.

Settling back in silence we studied the faces about us. As the music became gay and wild (they were playing the Prologue from Pagliacci) everyone laughed and sang. It has only a very few bars that are gay, however, and as the more crooning, mellow passages came on it was interesting to see the instant change. Women who had been gay, laughing and chattering a minute before, suddenly seemed to be enveloped in sadness. Faces grew cold and hard.

One woman attracted me most. She sat opposite to us and had been the gayest of her party till the music went into its sadder tones. Then she suddenly changed; her face lost its youth and she sat on numbly, staring vacantly ahead of her.

"A bit of soft music and how quickly we remember," I remarked to Loutie, who also had noticed her. But Loutie, too, was gazing into the distance.

In a moment there was a change. A rollicking waltz started. The cimbalo broke into an ecstasy of riotous tones, inertia was no more ap-

parent and the sadness flitted away as easily as it had come. The world annihilates its cares with little effort, but music will always remain something devilishly self-revealing.

The while we talked, now half seriously and again playfully silent with each other like old friends, I saw Loutie's face become suddenly clouded. She knew I detected the instant's betrayal of her thoughts and she immediately assumed a false air of gaiety.

"Now what?" I asked.

She paid no attention to me, studying my face in perplexity. Then she said seriously, "You seem so lonely always. Haven't you anyone that cares for you? Where are your folks?"

"Well, that's part of my past, Loutie, and we won't talk about it," I answered. I thought of the home I had quite thrown away.

"Anyway, you ought to let them help you. Why don't you?"

"I will some day," I answered moodily, "when it will be too late."

"Oh, you're more queer each time I see you," Loutie exclaimed restlessly. "You seemed so easy to know, at first, and now I don't believe I

will ever know you. You need someone to help and advise you. I'd do it if I knew enough."

"Thanks, Loutie, very much," I replied; "but please don't. We must never give advice to friends."

I took her home to her boarding place far up town and then came back on the subway.

I saw her very often in the days that followed. She was my only haven.

It is all very strange, very odd. Surely I must have been of peculiar makeup, to turn immediately from Cleodore to Loutie. Even now I wonder sometimes at the things I did and at my ability to view them so reflectively.

I suppose that like other people I had a two-sided nature. One night, as I lay awake, I remember I likened myself to the poet Aldrich's picture of No-Man's Land where the soul meets its double: —

"And who are you?" cried one agape,
Shuddering in the gloaming light;
"I know not," said the second shape,
"I only died last night."

The thought that I could have had a devilish second self of this sort actually frightened me, but nevertheless seemed to fit my case. Perhaps it was that my soul had become hallucinated by love and that Cleodore and Loutie were the spectre things.

It was about this time that I changed my lodging place to Third Avenue, taking a small second story room, that looked out upon a tangled web of "L" rails.

I found the place through my barber, who was rather a friend of mine.

"I don't suppose you would want to rent a room cheap, would you?" said he to me one day.

"I am interested in anything cheap — what about it?" said I.

He told me that he shared a floor in a house with two friends of his. He had furnished it himself and his share of the rent made the room cost him a preposterously small amount.

"I've got to go away and I don't want to lose six months' rent. I'll let you have it for what it costs me," he said.

It ended by my taking the room and moving into it immediately.

After I got there I found that the barber's surroundings were about as bad as they could have been.

Inside, the eye was appalled by a dazzling array of sartorial bibelots — tight-legged women of the stage mixed with lithographs of the prize fighting celebrities of recent years, while across part of the window one could see the reverse side of a heavy wooden sign which had been put up by a little French wigmaker, downstairs.

Outside, the trains, scurrying back and forth past my window, kept up an incessant fusilade of noise, but I soon became accustomed to the clangour, during the day. It was at night that it nearly crazed me.

After a few days I learnt that the trains ran upon a half hour schedule between two and five o'clock, so I never went to bed until the first "owl" had come past. This unnatural existence soon had its effect upon me and I gradually became lower spirited and physically depleted. Too, it was at this time that I formed the habit

of sitting motionless for hours and staring out of the open window with vacant gaze.

This was bad for me, of course, and I would come to my senses exhausted and worn. It was a sort of lethargy that enveloped me and I seemed unable to fight it off. Before me would go racing incidents of the previous weeks — the choosing of a new vocation, the loss of my manuscript, the meeting of Cleodore, and a hundred other incidents chased before my vision the instant I quieted myself.

I was in a state of semi-catalepsy, brought on by the many days of anguish that I had endured. The effect was terrifying. For the first time in my life I understood what the drunkard's delirium tremens must be.

One incident, however, has stayed by me and I remember it served to give a tinge of irony to my plight. I was walking over Madison Square to my room when I encountered an old university classmate.

During the other days he had been one of the type that go about with hand extended, always trying to say a pleasant word and wishing every-

one good luck. His hypocrisies only impressed you with their idiocy after he had left. Physically, he had followed the signs that were noticeable in his school-days, having developed into a very heavily set individual, with big pouch and double chin topped by a mouth that was wide with good humour (though in repose the mouth was hard and sly looking, revealing some of his inner nature).

"Well, Laurence," he said, greeting me with a squeeze of my hand. "Who'd a thought that I'd run on to you. Tell me all about it, I heard you gave up medicine, took to writing novels and all that. Suppose you are living way up in 'G' now and won't notice us common folks. How many books have you written and what's the name of the last one?"

When I told him that my work was appearing steadily in the different magazines but that I didn't want to use my own name until later on, he seemed to believe me, though he went on asking questions, wanting to know when each came out, what the magazines were, and how much they paid me.

"I suppose," he kept on, "you are making more money in a week than you would have in a year from your medicine. But then you always were a wise one. I always said that you wouldn't have given it up unless you knew where you stood. By the way, what was the name of the last book?"

Of course I lied. I had to. He made it impossible to do otherwise. He knew very well, from my sad appearance, that I wasn't entirely prosperous. Yet he took a certain keen delight in flaunting the realisation of failure in my face. It was no harm to lie.

I should not have paid any attention to him, but I was in a desperate state, anyway, and though the remarks in coming from him meant nothing, still they showed me my position with renewed force and roused me to attempt self-defence.

I was a luckless failure; and my spirits left me completely after that. One day, almost crazed with melancholy, I sought Loutie at her lodging place far up town.

"Loutie," I cried, "I'm through fighting.

Everything goes wrong and I'm in harder straits than ever. You've got to stay by me, child. I'm afraid to be alone."

"My poor boy, my poor boy," she answered, running her hand over my face. "I'm so sorry. You are in awfully bad shape, aren't you?"

She failed, however, to understand entirely the full meaning of my words.

"I'm down and out, Loutie," I continued, "and I'm coming to you like a piece of junk. But you understand, I know. Loutie, I want you. I want you to be by me, day and night. I can't give you anything, but I want you because I need you — to keep me from doing something a thousand times worse."

Then she seemed to comprehend. For an instant she stared in silence.

"Oh, Larry," she gasped. "I didn't know what — you meant — at first."

I went on earnestly, "You will, dear, won't you? Why, Loutie, you've got to. I'm a weak fool but I can't help it. God only knows what I shall do, if you don't come. And then why shouldn't we, anyway? There's no one that has

any hold on you — and how terribly lonely we've both been."

She went over to the window, sobbing gently, as I continued my pleading. After a time we both became silent and I could see that my words had not made her altogether unhappy.

I debated over the question. Would we be doing wrong? In my selfish moment I saw no way that trouble could come of such a companionship or that there would be any harm done. It might even make us both happy.

I tried to look at it from her point of view as well. It wasn't as if Loutie was an innocent young girl, I reassured myself. She had told me something about her life.

"What are you thinking of?" I heard her ask. By this time I was on the sofa, my head buried in my hands.

"Oh, I was thinking about the fix I'm in," I answered.

"Dear boy," she said, coming over and seating herself beside me and endeavouring to lift my head with her dainty hands. "You are in a bad way, aren't you? But I am to blame for your

discouragement and I know it. There is something that I should like to say — that somehow I just can't," she went on hesitatingly.

"What is it, child?" I asked.

"Oh, it's so hard to say — but — I just want to tell you that I feel that I owe you more than I can give, or that you can ask for. I just want you to know, Larry — that — that you don't have to beg for it. I hate this place, anyway."

Then I caught her regarding me curiously.

"What's the matter, Loutie?" I questioned.

She waited still longer, than answered me directly. "I'm just thinking how awful strange this all is. It seems real enough when I don't look at you, but when I do, I can hardly believe it. Your face and the way you talk shows that you don't belong in the hole you've got yourself into."

"My face? How is that?"

"I mean it looks — well, it nearly makes me cry when I look at you and hear you talk. You are so different from other men. Here I let you talk this way to me and still it doesn't sound the way it has when other men said it. They're so

awfully common when they talk about this kind — of thing. And you only seem better for it."

Then she came close to me. "You're going to be a big man, some day, I'm sure. And I don't want you to have to ask me for help when you're under. I want to have my part in it, of my own accord. Some day I'll have it to think of."

And now, as if in a dream, I found the dear girl telling me that she hadn't been able to forget me since the first time in the restaurant. She went on sympathising and encouraging me, while each little word of affection wrenched my heart woefully, for it brought Cleodore back vividly to my memory — and the love I had given her.

I felt undeserving and greatly humbled.

"Boy," she said, after a time, "you've made me happy. You've got me to caring for you."

And she took my hands in hers and looked tenderly in my eyes. "Of course — I want to be by you," she said softly.

I won't easily forget Loutie. At that time, I, like most men, regarded women as being living examples of mutability, selfish and deceptive, willing to sacrifice any amount of self-respect and

pride, to conquer an unwilling victim of their charms. But she changed all my cynical ideas of women.

I have gone on many a winged journey since those days, piloted by the thought of that early goodness of Loutie. Her open, childlike frankness, her honest willingness to give herself entirely to me without any gain, simply because she cared, made me reverence her. I say this, knowing how she changed after the battle came; but that was weakness. And what right have I to blame another for being weak?

She was one of the many thousands who simply give, because of the heart impulse that their Creator instils in them — and in return getting nothing but abusive ostracism and some pity.

A man, doing the same, is only called human, and is more adored than ever by the sex that is made to suffer. . . .

Loutie was unable to come to me at once, she told me, because of a month's rent that had been paid in advance — dear methodical Loutie! However, our new understanding seemed to make

the time go more quickly, as we saw each other regularly every day.

In youth, one doesn't realise that the day gone, never returns. Sometimes now, when I get to thinking and wishing, I feel sorry — but after all, I am so happy, and I guess that everything turned out for the best.

I feared, however, that my uninspired view of the situation would be discernible by Loutie. I would find her eyeing me curiously at the times she came to see me. Her instinct was remarkable and kept me wondering constantly; I found that I could not easily hide my thoughts from her.

"What are you thinking of, boy?" she would ask, questioning me with her eyes as well as her lips.

Then I would answer calmly, though I feared constantly that I would make a slip and start the ripple of suspicion into a tempest.

It was usually the same answer. "Why, Loutie, I was only thinking of you"— and the ripples would never break. But it was hard to fool Loutie and sometimes I even fancied that she really knew and understood.

I went through a peculiar cycle of thought at this time. At first I believed that life would be gaunt and empty without Cleodore. Then gradually I came to understand that for her the best outcome would be to marry the other man.

What was I? What had I to offer? It was an easy question to answer.

I didn't know then what an influence the sight of her had over me.

Yes, I saw everything plainly. And yet, during the time while I was still living in the midst of my hard resolution and glorious flesh dreams of Loutie, I found I was unable to keep away from the little restaurant where I usually met Cleodore.

The thing was really of psychological interest. I dreamt of Loutie and rushed blindly to Cleodore. I had grown to hate the woman I last saw leaving on the ocean liner; yet, as I walked towards the little restaurant, I felt my heart throb in the same anticipating way as when I had gone to meet her, agitated with love.

Then, I did not know the reason. I did not know that the explanation lies in the fact that

truth controls the emotions. One cannot lie to one's own heart.

One day I found Cleodore sitting in a corner eating her lunch. I had supposed her still in Europe. I fancied that I would not have gone there had I known. I felt wrathful with myself for betraying my feelings and letting her see that I still cared and thought enough about her to come to our old haunt.

When I saw, however, that she had noticed me, I could only make the best of it. Boldly I stepped to her table.

"When did you return?" I asked coolly.

"Why, just yesterday," she replied. Her answer was as cool as my question. With some satisfaction, however, I saw the colour mount in her cheeks and felt her hand tremble and turn cold as I greeted her.

"You didn't stay very long," I remarked.

"No," she answered, "I never realised how much I had to attend to, until I got over there. Then, of course, I couldn't rest till I came home and got it off my hands."

We talked on for some minutes, quite dispas-

sionately, I thought. Yet, as we talked and I viewed her passive contemplation of me, there arose in my being all the accumulated passion, all the distress and mistrust of the past weeks; and I resolved to put her under an inquisition that would even up for some of my own past suffering.

I don't suppose there ever was a lover, who, in some moment does not want to strangle to death the woman he loves, and yet comes to his senses to find his arms about her neck. And I was no different, for I ended up by finding myself muttering something about being glad to see her and hoping she had had a pleasant voyage.

She answered as before. I could see, or at least I thought I could, that she knew what I suspected and the way I was trying to turn the conversation.

"Yes," came her reply. "A very good voyage, indeed, but not very interesting."

"Ah! we cannot be interested in the outside world if we don't bother to notice," I said. I meant to imply that she had probably been content in a world of her own, on board ship.

She may have understood me, for she an-

swered, "Well, before we bother to notice it, the outside world you speak of must first be as interesting as the one we live in." I thought I saw her smile faintly. "Isn't that true?" she added.

"Quite," I answered, as I discovered the inner meaning of her remark, "but there is no limit to the interest our own world may have for us — if it holds another beside ourselves."

I saw that she understood thoroughly now.

"You are thinking of — my friend on the boat, aren't you?"

"Yes, I saw you."

"I knew that too," she said slowly. "I fancy you were very much surprised that I shouldn't be alone, when I told you I would be."

"Well, I supposed that you had reasons," I answered coolly, while in my heart was a wild pulsation and enough anger to nearly get beyond my control. It fairly crazed me to have such vicious repartee with the woman whom I had last held in my arms.

And then, I heard from her, what I had feared to hear; heard what I had understood thoroughly, but yet could not bring myself to believe.

"Yes," came distinctly, "there was a reason. But it's of no use for us to go over the whole thing. We both made fools of ourselves, somewhat; and it is all over now. I am engaged to be married to the man you saw on the boat. His name is Gordon Hemingway."

Her words galled me to the quick. "Just like a woman!" I repeated to myself. I knew it. What perfidy. They expect that months of devotion and love and dreams which warp the whole body and soul can be whisked away in an instant simply by saying, "Let us forget. It's all past!"—God!

In that moment all the builded dreams, the terrible nights and days of stress and disappointment came back to my memory, swelling into a passion that made me fear its enormity. However, I did control myself, chivalrously.

"I suppose you know best," I said simply. "I wish you every happiness." And then I turned to go. "Good-bye," and I extended my hand.

It seemed a minute before she extended hers, and when she did, it was more like the movement

of an automaton. "You — you, haven't anything — more — to say," she gasped.

"Why, no. I trust that we can always be friends."

She laughed. "I suppose you have amused yourself in the last few weeks?"

"Well, I haven't been so terribly alone," I answered.

"So!" she exclaimed. "Pray, who is she?"

"Can that make any difference, now?" I asked placidly.

Then I saw the old quivering of her lips, and her eyes flashed out from their former quiet, into fire and excitement. I felt like taking her in my arms at that moment, and smothering her with love.

"Yes, go — go," she repeated hotly. "Go, I know I did right. It was what I meant to do all the time. I only hope we won't ever see one another again."

On my way back, I went over in my mind the whole of our short conversation; and one little incident stood out clearly above the rest. It was after she had told me of her engagement that I

saw her lips move, and ever so feebly — (I even think she didn't intend to say it) I heard her ask, "You — don't you care?"

I wasn't sure that her words were not the product of my own imagination. . . .

"So — it's true, true," I repeated over and over to myself as I walked on. When I gained my dreary, noise-racked chamber, I could not say how I had arrived there.

"Dear God," I repeated to myself. "You hear, it's true!" and though I had lived in the thought of it for weeks I now seemed overwhelmed at the realisation.

It would have helped me to cry. Once in the days before, I had come home with tears in my heart that should have come to my eyes and relieved me, and as they stayed back, I had looked into the mirror, begging and waiting for them to come. In soliloquy, I remembered saying, as the child counts sheep trying to go into slumber, "Brace up, brace up, Larry, old man! It's hell, of course, but look — you are not so bad off. Cry — and you'll be all right, you'll feel better."

And I stood in front of my drooping reflection

repeating pleadingly, again and again: "Cry — Oh, damn you, cry," and then the tears started.

But this day I tried, and couldn't. In the place of tears there seemed to come a sort of prayer for her, mingled with oaths.

My heart seemed bursting with a feeling of revenge, and yet at the same time I felt sad and sorry, pitying her for her blindness in not seeing rightly. I wanted to take her in my arms and tell her how wrong she was. I wanted to tell her what love really was, and how I loved her; I wanted her to see that all the correctness of choice could not be heeded if one loved.

All of a sudden I longed to tell her what this other man could give her, was not love, that her need was for a simple, beautiful passion that I began now to understand — a passion that only now I began to appreciate and that I wanted her to share with me.

In that instant I saw what she meant to my life — inspiration, sympathy, everything that I cared to live for.

CHAPTER XII

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

NEVER in my life did I act with a more henlike foolishness, with a more abject lack of comprehension, than during this French trip of mine.

To be sure understanding is always desperately hard. Many folk talk about having "a capacity to understand human nature" and with some of them I daresay it is not mere fatuousness, but the truth. Perhaps it is a gift like any other, this gift of knowing how to live. At any rate I do not possess it.

If I did, I should have been able to spare myself, and those who have come near to my life, much suffering. Somehow I am very seldom sure — at the moment — of my own feelings and desires. It seems almost insanely stupid to be like this. Heaven knows I have been punished for it.

Sometimes when I have been puzzled about my-

self and others I have realised my ignorance. That realisation has been some slight protection, but it has not always come to me. It did not come in the days that followed my sailing from New York. Bereft of even that little safeguard, I was pig-headedly complacent almost all the time, never for a moment doubting myself and my judgment.

On the voyage back from France, I wallowed in my own stupidity. Perhaps there was some excuse; the ship's company was — for almost the first time in my experience — a pleasant one. I was constantly with other people, went to bed sleepy, and barring a few minutes of daily reflection in my bath-tub, had scarcely time for lonely thinking during the whole journey.

It was hard for me to start work again at my office. I had so many other things I wanted to do. I had been thinking about them as I came over on the boat — it was to these small plans that my rare moments of solitude in the bath-tub had been given.

In the first place I must have some clothes — not a real trousseau; I could not afford that; I

would get underclothes only. Clementine had a cousin who embroidered like an angel. She should make me some things. I planned them all very carefully.

Another of my ideas was less pleasant. I had a big brown mole on the back of my shoulder, a huge thing. It did not show in evening dress, and though I had always hated it, I had never taken it very seriously. But could I embark on a married career with this great thing on my shoulder? I scarcely thought so. I would go to a beauty doctor and have it removed.

I had a dozen other similar plans and went about them all with much earnestness. I reflected that womanliness was a woman's sweetest and noblest characteristic. How wrong and mistaken I had been not to realise this all along — the beauty of womanliness.

But now I knew. I had no doubt of it. What after all could be more womanly than to occupy oneself with the designing of chemises, and the removal of unsightly moles?

I was very funny, of course. But one must not laugh at oneself. The joke is too colossal. One

does not dare. I have often tried since to understand myself as I was at that time. Both my head and my heart seemed to fall asleep. Little ideas and plans buzzed in my brain. The wedding announcements would be done on linen paper instead of the usual sort; I would meet Gordon at the boat in a soft black dress and a hat with roses; I would keep Clémentine on as my maid; next summer I would go back to St.-Valentine-les-Roses and spend at least a month, or rather we would go. It was so that my mind busied itself. I had no realisation of the fact that it was a more serious thing I was doing than the mere sending out of announcement cards.

Indeed I thought of Gordon only as a figurehead. I wrote him kind letters and would welcome him pleasantly. Did I love him? I had never said so, though he had often told me that I did. At any rate his love for me was very grateful to me; it was so secure, so well-defined and conventional. It was that last quality in it that delighted me. I was tired; the picture of a love that would shield me from worry and temptation, that would never excite and never grieve me,

was as of a paradise. It was not the purely material side of marriage that attracted me, not Gordon's wealth as contrasted with my poverty. It was the peace I should have as his wife. Already everything was simple and easy I said to myself jubilantly. It did not occur to me that what I took for peace was merely a sort of stupefaction, that when I woke again, I might find myself worse off than ever.

As for Larry — so far as I could see — I took no longer any interest in him. I have since thought that the strange restlessness I felt, the compulsion to be always in some way active and never alone, was because of Larry. At the time my brains were too opaque with self-satisfaction for a thought so upsetting to shine through. I had a mind only for lingerie, my personal appearance, and the other material things in my new condition. These were the facts of life, after all; and Larry, I said to myself, had not, even when I was so infatuated with him, seemed a real person.

I continued to feel like this, even after seeing him, although at the moment the sight of him, and

the sound of his voice shook me more than I dared realise. I met him, entirely by chance, at a little restaurant where I often went for lunch, and where we had had many meals together.

The interview was to me a most unpleasant one. I felt horribly humiliated and angry. Here was this man in whose arms I had sobbed and agonised barely a month before, meeting me as if I were a business acquaintance. Had I had a pleasant trip? How was Paris looking? Evidently he despised me — could I blame him?

If I had been even a shade less stupid, I would have noticed that his was far from genuine indifference. Indeed, I did see that he looked at me oddly and that he fingered the buttons of his coat, with a more than usual nervousness. But it was not till afterward, days afterward, that I realised he was greatly upset. I am, at times, one of those folk who is capable of watching for half an hour a street full of people with raised umbrellas, and then suddenly waking to the fact that it is a rainy day.

"Oh, Paris was more charming than ever," said I. "I wasn't there long. No, I didn't buy

dresses. You see I wanted to spend my time with my friends." My tone and expression were alike simperish.

"Ah!" said Larry.

Somehow Gordon came into the conversation. I expect I dragged him in by the ears. I wanted Larry to know that I had found a husband. Larry might think me the sort of woman one kissed one day and talked weather to the next, but I wished him to realise that there were people who took me seriously. Lord, what a fool I was!

"Yes," said Larry, "I saw you with — someone on the boat."

I told him that this person was going to marry me. This wild oats of mine should be made to understand that I could sow orange-blossoms as well. And yet, even then I believed I weakened for a moment. Larry had always some strange influence over me.

"And you — what sort of time have you had?"

He looked at his finger-nails. Apparently, he'd not even missed me. My place was filled already. Well — it was not a hard one to fill,

all it needed was a woman who didn't mind — oh, I was angry!

"I hope I'll never see you again," I cried and then, when he rose at once, and said "Good-bye," I went on, with all the grace of a fishwife, to tell him that I despised him.

"I am sorry that's how you feel," said he and walked off.

I looked after him and thought he had a very nice back.

"Your young friend seems a trifle put out about something." I looked up and saw little Schreiber, who is John Shorter's confidential secretary. Shorter the publisher.

"May I sit down with you?" he went on.

Schreiber is a funny little fellow. I could not have cured him of impertinence short of calling a policeman. Besides he meant no harm, and I certainly needed company. "Quite a little put out," he continued.

"Oh, no, he wasn't really angry," said I, "it's merely that he is an eccentric fellow."

"He must be that. Did you notice his shoes weren't mates? No? — Well, they weren't.

They were both black, right enough, but one had a lot of those punched holes on the toe, and the other was plain as my face. I don't seem ever to have seen a chap with odd boots on before. He must have something on his mind."

Curiously enough, I scarcely thought of Larry for days after the meeting.

For one thing I was very much occupied. Gordon's mother was getting much better, he wrote me; as soon as he could leave her he would come home. We were to be married before Christmas.

My mole was almost gone. The electric-man considered it a very successful cure, but I somewhat missed the mole and decided it has been rather piquant and that I ought to have kept it. Clémentine's cousin was getting on well with the lingerie. She brought it to me piece by piece and since I had not told Clémentine of my engagement, I suppose she wondered why I was laying in all these elaborate chemises and things.

Presently one of my distant relatives from the South came to town to do shopping. She stopped at the Hotel Barbara Fretchie, and it is proof of the disinclination I felt to sitting about my flat

alone, that I was content to spend many evenings with her even there.

She was a nice motherly woman of very conventional type. Her unconscious influence was all such as to make me wish to store my wild oats as deep as possible in the forgotten past, and to tend my orange blossoms with industry.

"You've not told me anything, you naughty girl," said she, as I saw her off at the Hudson Tube, "but I've guessed."

I missed the good soul, although she and I seemed to have had little in common, except a strong approval of the married state. She had been married twenty years, all her children were dead but one who was married and lived in Omaha. Her husband, I gathered, was not altogether an ornament to his home. But her faith in matrimony never waned. She regarded the securing of a husband as the crowning achievement of a woman's career — nothing else mattered. To one in my position, such views were very gratifying. No wonder that as I sat by myself in the green chair that evening I wished her back, with all her pleasant optimism.

All alone there, I thought too much.

"Clémentine," said I, "put on your bonnet. We're going to the opera."

"One moment, Mademoiselle," she answered. She'd have said the same, if I had proposed she go ballooning. There's no friend, after all, so satisfactory as a faithful servant.

The opera was "La Boheme," a performance of a second rate company. The comic opening scene was over when we arrived and the love making in full swing.

When Mimi and Rudolpho made their bow and Clémentine could see their faces, she nudged me, as a French *bonne* will. *"Tiens!"* she exclaimed, "but he is like the Docteur Crewdon; is he not?"

I had noticed the resemblance before I found my seat, had noticed it for all the darkened stage, but I answered, "Why, so he is!"

The music affected me very much. I felt ashamed and a little frightened at being so greatly moved. My gloves were sticky, and the hands inside of them trembled. At the end of the third act, I asked myself whether I ought not to go away. It was only hysterical emotion, of course,

but I distrusted it at the moment. However I remained, saw Mimi come back to the garret — poor Mimi, her tragedy was so inevitable, and so pitiful.

No, I ought not to have stayed; I knew that, when Musetta brought the dying girl the muff. With tears in my eyes, I began to wonder who would bring me muffs, when I came to die. Would it be Gordon? No, he would be altogether out of the picture. Clémentine, perhaps? Or, if one could, just as one was leaving it, make life as one wished it —

Mimi was dead.

"Clémentine! Oh, Clémentine!" I cried.

"Yes, Mademoiselle." I believe she has been dozing. "What am I going to do, Clémentine?" I asked her in a whisper.

"I think you are going to take a cab home, Mademoiselle. You are not well." Perhaps she had not been dozing after all, my good Clémentine.

But I insisted on walking, tore through the dim streets with Clémentine, panting at my side, and not a sober thought in my brain.

"Life is so long," I said to myself, "and nothing in it but to-day and to-morrow and next day, over and over and over. One would know Tuesday from Wednesday by the headline of the newspaper and summer from winter by the weather, and after days and days, when one came to die — who would bring the muff? Perhaps one would have no muff at all, even at the end. Perhaps —"

"Now, Mademoiselle, I will make you a cup of hot chocolate. I am afraid you have caught a chill," said Clémentine.

But I did not drink it. I did not sleep, though I undressed and sat on the bed's edge for a moment.

I preferred to walk, wrapped in a wadded dressing gown. Up and down my sitting-room I went, thinking of the days and days to come.

"Am I mad," I asked myself, pausing before the looking-glass to see my face faintly reflected in the dawn. "Am I mad, or am I for the first time in all my life, really sane?"

My reflection could not tell me; and I walked on again, back and forth, still thinking.

CHAPTER XIII

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

It was five o'clock in the morning when she sent for me.

It came like a flag of truce to the revengeful, bitter mood which, when I saw her, had succeeded my former dejection.

Curiously, I had been fortified by the sight of her and the realisation that it was now all over, that nothing I could do or feel would make any difference.

I began to write again more strenuously than ever before. Within the week I had plotted out three short stories. One particularly pleased me. In it, I incorporated something to the effect that women were angels, when treated with kindness. I don't know why such an idea came to me; however, the subject haunted me continually and at last I concentrated all my labour upon this one effort.

I wrote on feverishly, filled with remorse over my dabbling waste of time and again not daring to stop, for fear I should think of myself.

The following week I took my story to the editor of an insignificant magazine, a man with whom I already had some acquaintance. He was an interesting individual from the picturesque side, being nearly illiterate in a literary way, yet making money out of his little magazine which had across its title page, the following inscription: "Snappy Tales from Real Life." His magazine ranked as a haven for all the rejected manuscript of the more dignified journals.

I went to him feeling that I stood a better chance with him than with anyone else. He had a certain sentimental appreciation that I found in no other editor of my acquaintance.

"How long is the story?" he asked me, after a cursory examination of the first few pages.

"About three thousand words," I answered.

He was still running through the first pages — "Something about the goodness of love?" he remarked.

"Yes, I take a bad woman and make her good by being kind to her —"

"Which is the wrong way, to start with," he interrupted.

"The wrong way! How?" I asked.

"Well, I'll try to explain it to you."

Then he went on to show that I had only the novitiate's conception of life. "This isn't true to real life," he said. "You've got to treat women mean, if you want to keep their love. You have got to beat them once in a while. Of course, not hurt them, you understand, but just to let them know who's the man."

"You mean to abuse the woman you care for?" I exclaimed.

"Of course. If you treat a woman kind and make a fuss over her, she will get tired of it after a while and find somebody who'll put in a little contrast and colour. You see, women are restless creatures. They take men into their lives because they want protection and strength near them — and the man must show his masculinity once in a while or the woman won't feel like the weak, dependent creature, she takes delight in being. So

you see, your story isn't true to life," he smiled.

"Are you married?" I asked apologetically.

"Sure," he answered. "I wouldn't know all this if I wasn't."

"And you follow this rule of yours?"

"To the dot," he replied instantly. "And my wife likes it. She tells her friends that she just leaves me alone after my fits of temper. But all the same, I notice she is sweeter to me then, than at any other time. It's because she admires me more. Why, she never thinks of putting her arms around me, until we have had a fuss."

I took my departure after a few minutes, leaving my story to be looked over by his reader. I had no hopes, however, as I felt sure that he had taken the few minutes with me as a means of sympathetic refusal.

I returned the next day and had no trouble in gaining admittance to his office.

"I've come for the story," I said, by way of introduction.

"You have? Supposing I should buy it. Are you willing?" he asked.

"You buy it!" I exclaimed.

"Why, yes. I take it that that was the reason you left it."

"Oh, of course — it was," I stammered. "Only —"

"Yes. I know. But you mustn't be so surprised," he replied, "or you will lead editors to believing that you aren't used to selling many stories."

Then he turned to his desk. "I really believe we can use this story," he said. "It's a little unusual, and that's what we want. It shows too, some pretty good thinking and a good idea of situation. If you have any more you might bring them in and let us see them."

"You — are too kind," I answered. "I can bring in some more — many more."

Then he took a check book from the desk drawer and with it a printed slip.

"You will sign this," he directed. "It gives us the dramatic and book rights of the story. It's only a matter of form."

As I took the pen from his hand, the thought struck me — what was I to receive? With that

strange shyness of a young author I hesitated, almost feared to ask it.

However, with carelessness, I said, "By the way, what am I to get for the story?"

I knew he would be fair with me, and that I had, in the condition of my finances, no right to be independent.

Yet it was a shock to me to hear him reply, "Oh, we have only one price for this sort of stuff. One-half cent a word."

"One-half cent a word?" I repeated after him. It really took me off my feet.

"That's it," he answered nonchalantly. "One-half a cent."

"Good heavens," I blurted out. "Why, there are only about three thousand words in the whole story."

"I know it," he answered. "That makes fifteen dollars, in round numbers. You don't have to take it if you don't want to."

"But I've worked like a dog on this thing for over a week. You mean to tell me that this is what other writers work for. Why, a bricklayer makes twice as much."

"Well," he answered, smiling. "There are people writing that make less."

I began to perceive the real order of things.

"Then it's not what the writer means to the reading public nor what he may teach them, but it's what the writer's name will mean to the publisher — isn't it?"

"That's about it," he replied. "When an ex-president goes on a hunting trip, the words he sends back are not worth $2.00 each or whatever the price was. No story is worth $2.00 a word to the reader, but it may be worth $5.00 a word to the publisher, if it advertises the magazine. You can see now, what literature means, in a commercial way.

"The world has gone on somewhat since the days when Hans Sacks gave his voice to the community for the pure joy of it. That's the reason that shoemakers are millionaires to-day."

"It discourages me," I answered.

"Won't make any difference to you, though," he replied. "You will be like the rest. None of you ever believes this until you've gone through it yourself. That's the reason I never have en-

couraged anybody to follow writing as a profession. We are the only ones that make money out of it."

He thought seriously for a moment. "We make it out of you, too," he added. "But you never make it out of us."

"Then you don't give the young writer with talent a fair price?"

"Ah, it comes back to the question of competition. We don't have to. There are a hundred waiting to take the first vacant place."

At that moment the mail came in and a full bushel basket of manuscripts was piled on the table.

"See," my friend laughed. "Every envelope of this stuff has some wild-eyed, ambitious artist at the other end, waiting for the check."

"How often do you get a bunch like that?" I begged.

"Nearly every day," he answered.

"But how can you read them all? Surely you don't send them back without looking at them, do you?"

"I see you want to get on the inside," he re-

plied jocularly. "Well, I'll tell you. Usually we can read the first paragraph and find out all we want to know. Sometimes the title kills any chance the story may have, or again the way it is sent to us. A story that doesn't show the ordinary knowledge of presentation, such as having it typewritten, etc., has little chance. Too, if a story comes to us worn out by rejection, we never look at it. So a lot can be discarded in this way."

I became more zealous in my questioning. "Then how many will you buy from this lot?" I asked.

"About seven or eight a month," he answered. "We have our certain people and we have to buy from them or they'll go elsewhere. It's the old story, you see, and we can't get away from it."

Then he looked at me quizzically. "Now do you want to sell your story?" he asked.

"Do I?" I repeated after him. "Why, I feel now, that I ought to pay you for taking it — after what you've told me."

"Well, it's the truth," he replied. "I took this time with you because I like you — and I

think that you're going to make good at this game."

I took his check and walked out of the office. It was perhaps a half hour later before I looked at the slip of paper he had given me. Fifteen dollars!

For one moment I thought of spending the money on one dinner for instance, but I soon banished the idea from me. I remembered the week of board I owed, and the room rent.

That night I was so afraid that someone might go through my pockets that I stopped in Monsieur Gayac's door and asked him to take care of it for me.

"I'm an awful fool with money, Monsieur," I said, "and I don't know but what you are. Perhaps you had better give it to your wife."

He laughed good-naturedly. "That's your idea of married life? You are foolish. If I did that both of us would never get it back."

I went to my bed fairly peaceful. "What a joke life is," I thought over to myself, and then wondered whether satisfied ambition ever solved the problem of happiness.

In the night I heard a pounding at the door, and a voice calling, "Dr. Laurence Crewdon! Dr. Laurence Crewdon!"

It was a messenger boy with a note. In the straggling light that filtered in through the blinds, I read: "Can you come to me at once? Cleodore."

Half frantically I began to put on my clothes. It was not yet five o'clock.

CHAPTER XIV

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

I SAT on the street doorstep. Now that I had made up my mind about things I felt rather sleepy and comfortable and leaned my head against the door-jamb with my eyes more than half shut. There was nobody to see, so early.

It is always like that with me after I have decided about anything. I am nearly crazed till I make my mind up, and then suddenly, it's as peaceful as Sunday breakfast in bed. I sometimes think that my wisest course would be to flip a coin the moment a question comes into my head, and so spare myself all the agonising.

With a little jerk, I realised Larry was there, looking down at me with an odd, half-pitying, half-questioning expression.

"I knew you would come," said I, "so I came down to wait for you. I've been awake all night." I got slowly to my feet. "Do I look it?"

"You look lovely," said he, and kissed me.

Nobody saw but an old cat with a fringed ear, a love token too in its way. I suppose.

"Upstairs is full of worries. Let us stay here," I said.

Then we walked along vaguely. It did not seem to make much difference where we went nor did there seem to be much to say, nor any great necessity for saying anything. It was as if we had always been together, and always would be — very simple, very pleasant, rather childish.

I remembered something a Frenchman put in a book once. I do not recollect who he was, but, at any rate, know he was one of those who loved George Sand. What he said was that the happiest thing in the world was for two people who loved one another to walk together in the open air, that they seemed to merge into one another and became one creature with four arms and four legs, two hearts and two heads. It does not sound very well, put into English, but Larry liked it when I told it to him.

I suppose, by the way, it was very forward of me to say it, since Larry and I, till then, had never

talked straightforwardly of loving one another, but I do not think that either one of us noticed.

"I had to see you," said I after a while.

"I understand," said he. "I needed you, too, but there was nothing I could do. The thing you had done made it impossible —"

"Don't," I cried. "Don't let's talk about that, now. Let us be happy, just for once? It doesn't seem such a great deal to ask."

"We won't ask it," said he fiercely, "we will take it."

"Meaning —?" I questioned.

"Oh, Cleodore, don't let's talk. We can't talk, we must not even think. You know that." And he kissed me again, and I think a milkman saw that time.

We had walked some distance further before either of us spoke again. It was Larry who stopped and looked at me earnestly.

"How right that French chap was!" he exclaimed.

I was pleased and puzzled. "Yes?" I said.

"Yes — I feel it all just as he said. Two arms, two heads, two hearts, two stomachs — and

they're both empty. It's a lot worse than one. Could you bring yourself to thoughts of breakfast, Cleodore?"

"I suppose that is what is wrong with me too," I answered. "I thought it was the pangs of love. Where shall we eat?"

"Providence watches over us, my child," said Larry, and there not four feet away I saw the entrance of one of the cheap eating houses that I had used to shrink from each day as I passed it on the way to my office.

It was only just opened for the day, and had had no chance yet to get very dirty and smelly, or at any rate, that was what I thought when I found myself sitting down at a table quite cheerfully in this place, whose very existence had used to seem an insult. Perhaps the difference lay only in that I was very happy. Things seem to be so much an affair of how you look at them. I sometimes wonder if anything really exists at all; or if all the world is merely a thing each of us makes up for himself, like the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves just as we are falling asleep.

I heard Larry order coffee and fried ham.

"Do you serve one order for two?" he asked.

"Huh?" returned the waitress.

"Evidently she does not," Larry interpreted.

"Don't you think tea would have been less of a risk than coffee?" I questioned when the young woman had gone.

"Bless me, Cleodore, the spice of danger is just what we both of us need. Besides, if we don't care for the coffee, we can exchange it." And he pointed to a sign in the window where we could read backwards the words "Unsatisfactory Dishes Exchanged."

"What do they do with the dishes they take back?" I asked.

"Offer them as fresh to the next comer, I expect."

"That's all right if it's hash or coffee or something that hasn't any shape. But suppose it's boiled eggs or an apple? They couldn't very well offer anybody an apple with a bite out of it. Maybe they sell the exchanged dishes at bargain prices. We should have asked the woman. We might have got something practically as good as new, for near nothing."

The waitress returned with our meal; and almost immediately Larry called her back and said would she kindly exchange our orders.

"Huh?" said she again, and Larry repeated his request.

"What's wrong with 'em?" she inquired.

"Oh, I say now," Larry complained, "that isn't in the contract. Your sign says 'Unsatisfactory Dishes Exchanged.' It doesn't say anything about having to tell why they are unsatisfactory. I insist on fair treatment; or I'll put the matter in my lawyer's hands."

The waitress looked greatly disturbed. There was nobody else in the shop at the moment. I think she was a trifle frightened.

"It's all right," said I to her, "my friend was merely trying to tease you."

"Trying to make a monkey of himself!" and she made off on her heels.

"If you hadn't interfered I might have got flap-jacks and sausages out of her without laying out a single extra cent," said Larry discontentedly.

I made big eyes over my heavy cup. "I can't bear to see anyone else bothered when I am so

happy," and Larry took the great thing out of my hands and held them for a few seconds.

Out in the street, we wandered toward Broadway.

"What sort of woman is your ex-landlady, Larry?" I asked *àpropos de rien.* One is apt to be disconnected conversationally when one is contented.

"Oh, all right. Just a landlady, rather better than most, perhaps. Why?"

"Is there anything she is specially fond of?" I asked.

"What on earth are you talking about, Cleodore?"

"Your landlady," said I.

"My child, how you do sparkle!"

"Well, it's this way. I want to give the woman a present. You see when I decided I had to see you, the only way I could find out where you were — you remember you told me you'd moved — was to telephone and ask her. And it was pretty early to call anybody up — four in the morning."

"What did you say to her?"

"Oh, I pretended I thought you lived there still, put a breathless quaver into my voice and said, 'Is the Doctor there? Doctor Crewdon. I want to speak to him at once.' Of course she said you had left and she was pretty cross about being waked up, but I told her it was an affair of life and death, somebody terribly ill, so she forgave me and told me where you were. And now I want to send her a present. You see I must give somebody a present, because I am happy, and she really deserves one. What would she like?"

"Well, judging by the table she used to set, she could make something to eat very useful — say a few pounds of coffee, or some fresh vegetables. But I suppose she would be more pleased with something ornamental — candy or flowers or something?"

"Sweets it is," said I, and we stopped at a shop just off Broadway where I chose and sent to her some very unwholesome looking chocolates with a card reading "From the lady who woke you up."

"I'm tired," said I. "Let us go home."

"Where are the worries?" Larry asked, as he

glanced about my little flat after Clémentine had opened the door for us.

I looked for them. The place had indeed changed since I left it a few hours before. I never had seen it look so charming. It had almost an air of distinction. The little breakfast table with its white cloth, the dish of tan chrysanthemums on the window sill, the Botticelli on the wall with its frightened faced little springtime ladies — I looked at them all with a kindly eye.

Fat Clémentine regarded me in some astonishment.

"Mademoiselle rose early? Mademoiselle will breakfast?"

"Shall we breakfast a second time, Larry?" I asked. "It would be only consistent with those two stomachs. Clémentine makes excellent coffee. You won't ask to exchange it for flapjacks."

Clémentine went off kitchenwards. She liked a compliment; and liked it best when there was a third by to hear it.

"Cleodore!" said Larry. His voice was low and odd sounding. I said something too, I don't know what, and moved toward him. If going

into his arms had meant the killing of us both, I do not suppose I could have kept away. I had only the one idea, to be near him. It was at once very simple and very strange.

In a sort of childish fashion I took stock of him, looked at his hair and patted it, noticed his eyes and his teeth as he smiled at me. But it is hard to look long at a face that is very near. One grows frightened.

"Have you missed me?" he asked.

One does not answer questions like that. One only says some foolish thing, or cries, or laughs, and afterwards one cannot remember which it was. But I know that I told him he had not changed, put my hands to either side of his face and looked hard. I thought it very wonderful that it should be so.

"Everything is in exactly the same place, and just the same colour and everything," I said quite soberly. I must, I suppose, have been a little crazy.

But he was crazy too, took hold of my shoulders and looked at me for an immense while and then said, "My God — it's true."

We heard Clémentine with her rattling tray and I ran into my little bedroom to take off my hat — and to hide my face from her.

But bless you, Clémentine knew. Her big face wore a tender look and she nearly let slip the coffee tray as she turned her eyes from Larry to me.

Larry made an excellent second breakfast. I suppose men are like that. For myself I can never eat even in the midst of quite little emotions; and now did not even pretend to try. I watched Larry's hands with the knife and fork in them.

"You're tired, child, aren't you?" he asked.

"I didn't sleep last night. I've a wee headache, but it's nothing."

"Go take a nap."

I shook my head, but Larry assumed the manner of a physician, and like other women I am always hypnotised by the professional air.

"What will you do?" I asked. "You won't go away? You must not go away." I clung to his arm.

"Of course not, child, I've got a thing I am

writing in my pocket. I'll put in my time revising it."

"And you will wake me soon? After an hour — promise me that."

"You need more sleep than that, but I promise to wake you in two hours."

I was near dropping with fatigue and had scarcely the energy to shift into a dressing gown, but I swore as I lay down that I would wake up of my own accord in an hour at most.

"And I've done it too," said I to myself, as I opened my eyes again — it could not have been twenty minutes later.

Larry sat at my bedside.

"How do you expect me to sleep when you sit and watch me?" I asked petulantly.

"You've been doing it this couple of hours," said he. "I came to wake you as I promised, but you were sleeping so soundly I couldn't bear to. So I sat beside you. I knew the reason you wanted to be waked was so that I should not be lonely, and I've had your society, my dear, without the exertion of having to make conversation with you."

"But I've not had yours," I complained.

"Child, you should learn unselfishness; and you should get over your dreadful habit of snoring."

"Larry!"

"I was only trying to tease you, dear.'"

"'Trying to make a monkey of yourself!'" I quoted.

"Your headache is better," said he.

I took his hand down from my forehead so that I could look at it. There is something wonderfully appealing in the hand of someone we love. It seems like a little man in itself, a faithful dumb miniature of its owner. I have been thinking how to say what I mean, but I cannot. I must leave to those who have loved to understand without my saying it. The others would never understand anyhow.

I took Larry's in mine and held it just before my nose where I could have a good look at it. I turned it about and moved the fingers back and forth, and counted them carefully — I, Cleodore, in my twenty-fourth year and an emancipated woman! There was, I discovered, a scratch along

the outside edge, and a good growth of fur on the back.

"The only specimen in captivity, procured at great danger and expense, and now for the first time put on exhibition!" Larry interrupted.

Clémentine did her best for us at dinner time; and considering that she had not expected us and I had given her no orders, she did very well. I recognised in her concoctions reminiscences of other days — yesterday's fish, Thursday's roast lamb and so on, but Larry met them all for the first time and with delight. By some good fortune there was a bottle of excellent Beaune in the cupboard. Clémentine waited on us with an air that said, "Bless you, my children."

When we were finished, Larry set down his coffee cup, and took mine and then blew out the candles so that we sat in the twilight.

"Cleodore," he said, "this makes up for all the pain I've suffered since you left me — that morning on the boat."

"Oh, Larry! please not," I begged.

"Very well, child. After all, we don't have to talk now; do we?" he said gently, and he took

my face in his hands and kissed my eyes, my forehead, my mouth. And then he strangely stopped short, half frenzied, I thought.

"I've got to have you!" he said. "I've got to. I love you more than any living thing on earth. I've got to have you. And if you love me, you'll understand and want me just as much. Child, let's be honest with one another; let's be happy."

"I will do whatever you wish, Larry. I can't fight you any more. I've tried so hard."

Presently we heard Clémentine moving about, and as she went into her little bedroom she said "Good-night" to us both.

When her door had shut, Larry grasped me to him again, but I pushed him away.

"Larry, after all, we mustn't," I said. "I couldn't face her — in the morning. She'd be so grieved and worried. I couldn't."

"You dear," he half laughed. "How human you are."

I suppose he could see that for him I would have dared the eyes of a dozen servant-maids.

"Couldn't we go away somewhere together,"

I thought on. "To some little wee place, where there are woods and cows? Do you understand?"

"Dear child, of course. We'll go Saturday. Oh, Cleodore!" he cried, "and last night at this time we thought we should never see one another again."

CHAPTER XV

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

THE three days in the country passed trance like.

In the corner of a big field we found what Cleodore called "a spreading chestnut tree"—it was really an elm. On the grass under its covering branches we sat for hours, our thoughts rampant and our hearts beating in unison.

We sat and stared, murmuring that there was so much to tell each other, and so little time. At the end of each day, we found our confidences only beginning, and at the end of our holiday there seemed more to tell than ever.

Cleodore remarked it too, I remember. "I feel so happy, like a foolish kiddie," she said as she bade me good-night the first evening.

Our country jaunt seemed to have been taken with an avowed purpose in mind, but we realised before the first day was half over, that to give in to our passion would be tremendously wrong.

The fight was hard, all over again. When I caught sight of her supple, rounded limbs, close to me, and the soft skirts wrapped so carelessly about them, the old battle waged anew.

"Cleodore," I cried, "I wonder if you know how perfect you are?" and then I found my hands roaming about her beautifully moulded ankles.

She held my hands back. "Don't, Larry, please don't," she protested.

But the thought in my hands was stronger than in my head. At that minute, I knew that no will of mine could keep my hands away. They seemed to cry for the touch of her.

In a moment I had felt the warmth of her soft flesh and my wits became drowned in a torrent of jealous craving and blind desire.

She fought me back now. "Larry, for God's sake," she begged. "We can't, we can't. Think of me."

I looked at her face and it was distorted with fear. For an instant, there shot through me the same feeling that a criminal must have; and my hands stopped their wanderings — I saw the wav-

ing grass in the fields and the cow on the crest of the hill again.

"Yes, we mustn't, child, we mustn't," I cried. "This can only end in one way, if we keep it up." Ridiculously I was pleading that we stop, and yet doing all the urging.

I moved away from her, but only for an instant. She clutched at my hands and drew them up in front of her eyes. For a moment, I felt the trembling, quivering lids under my fingers and then — she seemed to give away completely.

"Oh, I don't care how it ends!" she said shakily. "I long to make you happy, no matter what the end is."

How strange it all was. Away from her, I had been able to think calmly. But now if I should have stopped to consider, I would have been held aghast at the audacity of Cleodore's lover. I cannot conceive what it was that threw us so radiantly into this mood. It may have been the surroundings — solitary country, clear atmosphere, perfumed by the ozone of the green hills; it may have been that the inaudible tone of nature about us was in tune with the harmony that

beat within us. At least, I know that every passionate thought that came into my mind that afternoon had a hundred times the virility of other days.

Her kisses made my senses reel, her touch made me throb with near uncontrollable desire, and I was continually longing to take her in my arms again and cover her with my embrace.

But my will came slowly back to me, even as I kissed her lips, her hands.

For a time she looked up at me appealingly, and then I saw the timid begging on her face melt into a pathetic, tender smile. "Oh, Laurence," she said softly, "I don't know — what I think. I can't stop to think. I only know that I care for you so much. And I want you, too."

Then she bent over to me, dragging my face close to hers. "I don't care what the arguments are," she faltered.

Her utter yielding brought me to my senses, though to this day I do not know how I fought off my nearly conquering emotions.

But our three days were not entirely delirious,

though each one as it closed left us frightened and not even daring to think of the next.

On the train back to New York, I felt overjoyed at the realisation that we were returning as we had come, and that the enemy was still at bay. For an instant the thought would confront me: suppose we had given in — what then? I even found myself praying in thankfulness.

We threw off easily, though, the contemplation of what might have been, and our ride back to the city was splendid in its intimacy. For the first time since our earlier acquaintance, we talked of my brief medical career. Cleodore rather made fun of me and asked if I remembered the evening she fainted, and how I saved her life.

"I suppose you think my medical career a myth don't you?" said I, smiling.

"It does seem so unreal," she answered. "You — a doctor." Then she gave a sigh. "I could imagine you almost anything else."

"That's because you're not used to the new species," I remarked. "When you think of a doctor you associate him with a comic paper beard and wrinkled brow and imagine you hear him say,

'Yes, I think I can save your child.' Why, nowadays, doctors never look at your tongue and try to impress you with their knowledge."

Across from us sat a very fat woman, with two children, apparently twins, sharing her lap. I found Cleodore studying them seriously.

"What's wrong?" I asked. "I don't believe you are paying a bit of attention to my intelligent remarks."

"Oh, I am," she replied playfully; "I reverence your knowledge and all that. But I can't help wondering what sort of a doctor you'd make if those two poor children were brought to you with the measles." Then she laughed. "I really can't help wondering what sort of a doctor you'd make."

"A very poor one from my own standpoint," I answered. "When I was practising I suffered more than my patients. When they were really ill, I went from the premonitory symptoms to convalescence with them."

"Ah, but that was only sympathy," said Cleodore quietly.

For a moment I thought back over the year or

so I had devoted to practising. I thought over the peculiar confidences, the unthanked sacrifices that one makes in the profession. Before I knew I had launched into a tirade of protest against the world. Cleodore listened submissively.

"You can't know," I went on, "what it means to be a physician. If ever a doctor is a good doctor, then he is bound to be sympathetic and will take his patients' troubles to heart, no matter how long he has been practising, or how calloused he has become. I know a doctor, an eye specialist, who, on the day he is called upon to extract an eye that cannot be saved, will mope about fretting and irritated, unable to eat or sleep. Yet he is an expert and has removed hundreds.

"There is no profession or business in the world where one human being does so much for another, and gets so little for it. He exposes himself to infection, running a chance that not even the immediate family will take. Yet people think the doctor gets paid well. Why, there is no money payment for this sort of thing.

"A prize fighter, running the same chances, would make a fortune in a few minutes out of it.

And he need not spend years in training his brain for the work. Oh, I'm glad I gave it up. I —"

"Come, now," Cleodore interrupted. "Don't work yourself up so. Why, Larry," she leaned over to me and whispered,—"You haven't given me a thought, you've forgotten all about me, with your horrid medicine."

Then, as if to end the conversation, she turned her head away from me and leaned back in the seat, her dark, dreamy eyes half closed. "To hear you talk," she went on, "one would think you had been in a constant state of sympathetic abandonment. I hope you didn't have many patients that were very sick. You might have worn yourself out before I had a chance to have you. But I understand you. The thing that made you a good doctor, wasn't your learning or your knowledge of the science. It was your character and that was just the thing that made it so hard for you."

"You are very kind," I replied. "I only had a few sick patients, fortunately; but a good many who thought they were sick. I suppose I did

wear myself out discriminating. You see it's bad either way. . . ."

The long summer's day had dwindled into dark when I left Cleodore at her doorstep.

Our three days in the country had been glorious, one of those "Lebenstage"— all sunlight and love and peaceful nature, and I walked back to my room in a sort of half awake dream, living over in my memory the few hours that we had been together.

It seemed as if the few days had made her infinitely realler to me. The sweet intimacy of our life together had shown her to me in a new light. She was still the sympathetic, romantic soul, still the centre of my passionate dreams, but she had grown to be something else too. I knew her now as a gentle companion, full of the sweet tact that greases the wheels of life, and of childish, simple humour that gets the best of little things.

It was in this state of mind that I entered my room and found Loutie placidly occupying the only rocker. She had been awaiting my return for some time; I learned afterwards that my

friend, the wig-maker, had told her I had gone to the country.

"Well, where have you been?" she greeted me.

I could hardly find my speech. "Good Lord, Loutie," I blurted out. "You — here!"

It was a perplexing circumstance. In the past few days Loutie had quite slipped my memory.

"Sure, I'm here. I just had to come," she cried. "I got so lonesome, I couldn't stand it. There was four more days to the rent — Oh, I suppose I should have waited, but I don't care."

Then she looked tenderly at me, with her sweet, big eyes. "I'd do more than that for you —" But soon she puckered up her lips, pouting at my apparent lack of enthusiasm. "Why! Ain't you glad?" She hesitated with some surprise.

"Of course, dear child," I answered. "You know I'm glad — awfully glad."

"You don't act it."

"Well, Loutie, I'm — a bit overwhelmed. It seems so sudden, so real — all at once like, I never realised."

She came over to me and slipped her little, round arms about my neck. "I know, boy, you're sorry, ain't you? You think I'll regret it or be sorry myself — or something. I know you so well, and know just how you feel, and I think you are that much dearer for it."

"No, Loutie," I answered, not quite able to carry on my hypocrisy. "Everything is all right. What makes you think such things? You are trying to make me out better than I am."

"Oh, well, because I know how you are. You always try to cover up the good things you think and do. But you never need to worry, dear. No woman is ever sorry for what she does if it is love that makes her do it. And I care for you, Larry — so much. I'm just going to make you happy and work hard and write and get talked about. You'll see, we'll be awfully happy, boy."

So Loutie had come. Fate seems ironical in her whims. When I had wanted Loutie, when I was lonely and needed her, she staid away because of a few dollars paid for rent. And now — she was with me, dear, sweet, piquant, easy-loving

Loutie; the while my thoughts were full with another.

The next few days brought a change, however, into my previous order of existence. I couldn't quite account for it. Chaotic unrest was replaced by a placid, orderly existence and I remember that I lost some of my harassed appearance.

Yes, I owed a great deal to Loutie, though she was unconscious of it. She brought me nearer to realising what I ought to do.

I lived in a dream life of contrasts. Loutie and I would be looking open-eyed at each other, over our coffee cups, when immediately there would spring into my imagination the vision of Cleodore, and how good it would be if it were she that faced me.

I was living a lie, always, and at last it set me to thinking, deeply, seriously — and the few days spread themselves into the length of years. I suppose other men have been placed in just such a position as that in which I found myself, and have gone through the same self-questioning.

It was only the third or fourth day, after our liaison had been effected, that a simple conver-

sation brought my thoughts to a climax and caused me to arrive surely at a final decision.

I had met Loutie on her way from work, and we sat down in one of the park benches, to rest a moment and enjoy the early twilight. We were quietly musing over the different faces that passed us, when she suddenly remembered to tell me that the manager had raised her wages that day.

"Just think," she cried, "how that will help. I can share up on some new dishes for us."

This very idea had become a point of sore touch with me, and what little pride I had, made me rise rebelliously against her unselfish goodness. It hurt me, when she discussed this end of our affairs. I suppose it brought my selfishness to the surface — or else made me realise the situation more keenly.

And I asked colourlessly, "Did he pat you on the hand when he made this announcement, or did he follow it up with an invitation to dinner?"

Immediately Loutie was aroused. "Oh, Larry," she exclaimed —"for you — to say such a thing!" Then she turned her face away from me. I heard her say brokenly, "You're so mean.

I thought it would make you happy. Now you've spoiled it all." And the colour mounted high in her cheeks. I never thought till afterwards that she was secretly pleased at what she thought was my jealousy.

But I realised my blunder. "Don't, Loutie," I begged. "Don't take it so to heart. You understand me, don't you?"

Then I went on to explain that what I meant was not that I thought she had gained the raise through certain designs of her employer, but that it sickened me to have her remind me of the fact that her money was being used to help keep up our little establishment.

"It's this that hurts, Loutie," I went on. "Can't you see? It's the fact that it is your money. I can't stand the idea that I let you come here and then share in running the place. Now, if I could make some —"

Here she interrupted me, saying spontaneously, "Well, you're right, that is it." As she went on, I could see that my previous remark had pained her and aroused her ire. She added that it was strange that I couldn't make any money, that there

must be some reason. "You certainly work hard enough, and you ought to get something besides starvation for it. Supposing you wanted to marry somebody or I didn't have a job, what would you do then?"

Her question, tinged with anger, came like an electric shock. And it awakened me, sending thoughts through my brain with the energy of a storage battery. How right she was in her question. What could I do then?

Loutie noticed my seriousness and came over to me. "Don't, boy, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I just said what I did, before I thought. Don't you worry, I'll stick to you to the very last, you know that. Now please —"

And she begged me out of my thoughts for the moment, trying to pass off the unfortunate situation, lightly.

The harm (or the good) had been done, however. All night I found it impossible to quiet the anxieties that racked me. And very early in the morning — it was some time past two o'clock — I found the torture unendurable and, deciding that the streets would give me more place to fight out

the problem, I quickly slipped into my clothes and stole quietly from the room.

My thoughts seemed to have divided themselves. On the one side I saw a dark, sad face, beautiful with drooping lids and quivering lips — and again, a burning, living interrogation. And the question asked me was always the same: "What would you do if you wanted to marry?" It haunted me vindictively, like a flaming brand.

I don't know where I wandered that night. I have a dim recollection of walking, walking — and thinking. What a fool I had been to want Cleodore! What an idiot I was to yearn for the absolutely impossible! And how cowardly it would be of me, to drag down to the gutter the one woman I really loved. And supposing our relations made it necessary that we marry! What then?

Oh, Cleodore, this is the first time I have confessed to you, the thoughts that made me at once more proud and miserable than ever anything else in my whole life.

I reached my door, half greeting the inward

pain, and even happy at my resolution . . . for I had decided.

Coming up the stairs I met Monsieur Gayac. He had just left my room, and he greeted me, his face — usually so droll and comically happy — drooping.

"Oh, Monsieur, Monsieur, what have you done? Your little Madame is crying so — so," — and then he wiped imaginary tears from his own eyes. "You are a bad boy, Monsieur — her heart will break. You must tell me. I will fix it. You must, Monsieur."

"Why, Monsieur, you surprise me," said I, apparently mystified at his tremendous emotion. "I have done nothing. I have been nowhere. I just took a walk. I worked too hard yesterday."

"Ah, you tell me that? Me — your friend — your confidant. Ah, Monsieur Larry, it is not right, I should know."

After much persuasion and pleading I managed to reach my room alone. Very likely the sly, big-hearted wig-maker listened outside our door for possible trouble.

Loutie was at the breakfast table, crying, poor child. "Oh, Larry, Larry, you've scared me so," she cried, with big tears running down her cheeks, unheeded. "I thought you had left because —" she hesitated —"I was so mean last evening. Oh, boy, I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't come back. I believe I'd have killed myself."

Then I noticed that the tears stopped flowing, and that she viewed me curiously for an instant. Soon she brightened up, and ceased her low sobbing entirely.

"Why, tell me," she exclaimed. "Say it isn't bad news after all. I can see, you've got something good to tell me. You look so happy. Tell me, Larry." And so from her I learned that my inner joy at what meant the sacrifice of my entire happiness was shining through to my face.

Automatically I ate breakfast, questioned incessantly by Loutie. "You must tell me," she insisted, "I just know you've got some good news."

And I answered her by saying that I would tell her just as soon as I was sure that my hopes would

come true. As I spoke to her it seemed as if my voice sounded far in the distance. In my brain there was room for only one thought — that I must go as quickly as possible to Cleodore — and tell her. I could hardly await the time.

I had decided, and to pound the decision into my memory, I repeated it over and over to myself. Nearly audibly I said again and again, "You must give her up. You must give her up. You love her too much not to. . . ."

It was all so simple. I would go to her and tell her. If I was too poor to make Loutie happy, then I was too poor to let the woman I loved share my existence.

As I reasoned, everything seemed so plain, now. In a way, Loutie had been a Godsend. She had taken away the entire physical proportion of things and made the situation lucid. I could think plainly now and my love wasn't distorted by desire and selfish passion.

And I saw that I couldn't drag Cleodore down to the level I had reached. I saw too, that we did not dare to wait. Our passions would take us into roads that we could not dare to traverse.

I realised that probably she would at first be blinded by her feeling for me, but later she would surely see things clearly, would understand that for us to be together could not but be either wrong or else unendurable. She would forget easily, I reasoned, and the other man would give her so much. Women depend on material things more than we do, I told myself — and God knew what I could give her.

Yes, I must understand for her, must decide for her, no matter what she thought. Yet I loved her so. It was all painful, very painful — and so hard to do.

"Larry, you are thinking of someone, of someone else. I never saw your face so strange. Now tell me the truth. Where were you last night?"

I heard the words from Loutie's lips strangely aroused. I had quite forgotten my surroundings. As I became aware of Loutie, a certain feeling of resentment encompassed me. I had been dwelling on the heights and she brought me back to my senses with an unkind jar.

"No, Loutie," I answered harshly. "There

was no one in my thoughts or whom I saw. I am telling you the truth and I don't want you to ask me again." I wondered if the room was light enough to reveal the flush on my face.

"But there was, sweetheart, and I don't care, if you'll only tell me." She said it gently, but instantly I felt that my thoughts were being read. I was on the point of telling about Cleodore; of telling Loutie everything. Then I saw that if I did tell the truth about what I intended doing, Loutie would surely misconstrue my meaning and take it that I had given Cleodore up for her sake. And Cleodore, even as I renounced her, was too precious for that.

"Then you won't tell me?" my persistent Loutie asked again.

I looked at her. She was sitting facing me, her soft, blond hair done in a long braid down her back — her chin buried deep in her hands.

"Dear little girl," I answered, "please don't ask me. It was just a whim of mine. I was restless and felt like tramping the streets. I do that a good deal — and I couldn't take you with me

at such an unearthly hour. That's all. Please believe me."

It ended up by her telling me that I was peculiar, so peculiar — and that I was more strange to her each day.

I had a rendezvous with Cleodore at noon, and, as the morning wore on, my impatience grew boundless. One instant I would weaken and make up my mind that I was doing wrong and that I ought not to be so impulsive, and the next instant my nerves were beyond control and I was fearing that I would falter at the crucial moment.

I met her at the elevator, as she was leaving her office. She looked more beautiful than ever, I thought, as she directed the way over to our usual haunt, a little restaurant off Fifth Avenue. She always wore unusual things, and now the soft, turban like head covering and close fitting coat, made her at once more bizarre and fascinating than ever. It seemed that I had a poor setting for the exercise of my judgment.

As we turned off of Fifth Avenue, I begged her to walk on for a few minutes. I felt that I must gain some time.

"Please, Cleodore, let us not go to lunch, just yet," I said. "Let's walk over into the park."

I probably betrayed the feelings that were near consuming me, for instantly she remarked my peculiar manner.

"Why, Larry, what in the world is the matter? Tell me, quickly!" she exclaimed in a startled way.

I couldn't find my words. "No, not just here," I replied. "Walk on for a few minutes."

"What is it?" she begged. "You frighten me."

"Wait, Cleodore," I managed to murmur, "wait until we get into the park."

Before my eyes was an indescribable haze, and the arteries in my temples seemed to pound and beat, till I nearly fell over. But I resolved to abide by my previous decision.

After reaching a bench, we sat in silence, strangely, mutely — for many moments; it seemed as if it was by common consent.

At length I heard myself begin to speak. The words seemed to come from one other than myself. "Cleodore, you are right," I began. "I

have something to say. Something that has been on my mind ever since our little trip. And you must know that what I am going to tell you isn't the result of impulsive thinking or hasty decision, but something I have lived over in my mind day and night."

As I went on, I found that I must keep my eyes from her countenance. It seemed that I could feel her searching glance penetrate me.

In another moment, I had stumbled into what I intended to say. At first I felt inwardly frightened. Then before I knew it, I was saying easily what had appeared to me to be so difficult. But my words come grotesquely mixed, a jumble of earnest decision and faltering confession.

"Dear, I — I love you," emanated from me. "I love you, that's the reason. We can't see each other again. You must understand. It is impossible for us to marry. I love you too much — I won't. And I go nearly crazy when I'm with you, and I am afraid for your sake. So we can't see each other at all. There's no other way."

As I went on, I gained courage and felt that I was talking more sanely.

She viewed me with surprise and dread written over her face. But she let me go on, without uttering a word. And for fear that I should falter, I went on rapidly, crowding in every reason that my devastated senses could gather.

"Yes, there's no other way, we must use our will and be strong."

I was wishing I could tell her it was all for her sake, that I knew I would be keeping her away from the man that could give her everything — but I realised how cowardly that would be.

"I am poor," I continued. "I couldn't buy you a bit of food. I am living in a hell of a hole, that I could no more think of taking you to, than of throwing you from the top of the Metropolitan tower. I don't want you to feel sorry. You mustn't care, even. It is the only way."

Then for the first time, she broke her silence. "Larry," she answered, "what you say may be very true and perhaps you are right, and when you tell me that you love me, I believe you. But we can see each other just the same. Surely that would be all right. I think you have become hysterical over a simple thing. Why we can't see

each other is only a creation of your own brain."

"No, it isn't," I replied. "I know that I can't keep on being with you, and resist. You don't see this end of it, as I do. There are certain laws that we must live up to — Nature's laws — and we can neither abort them nor give in to them. This is plain truth."

Cleodore came nearer to me, grasping both of my hands in hers. "Larry," she said, "you are the one who doesn't understand. I'm not a child. I am a woman, with all a woman's understanding and feelings. What do you think women — I, care for laws, when we realise what is good and honest happiness to us? If you were a woman you'd understand, if you went through half the suffering a woman goes through.

"You don't know that we endure all of it — for the some day we are waiting for and never cease believing must come. Why, that is all that keeps life in the bodies of women of forty, who have been unfortunate enough not to have been loved.

"Oh, Laurence, you're wrong, terribly wrong. I don't care for people, or laws, or consequence.

After all this time, I know what is worth having, and it is just the one thing — honest, blind, feeling. It's something that only the one you love can give you and all the other people on earth cannot take away."

Luckily the park was deserted. A few struggling shop people passed us, and for a moment a couple of ragged street urchins gazed upon us, with open-eyed awe. We were unusual figures in the makeup of the place. But time and surroundings were not in our thoughts. "This maudlin self-respect, this opinion of others, what do they bring to you?" she went on. "People only sympathise, or envy you in this world; there's no half way place. And I know which I prefer. I will take for granted that what you say about marrying is right. I suppose it would be foolish for us to marry with such circumstances. But have we the right to rob ourselves of all that means life to us, because of the misfortune of others? Of course others have brought shame and disgrace upon themselves by tempting fate too strongly. But these names are only terms that are created by the unfortunate or the weak.

You are weak and foolish if you believe in them.

"Why, how is it possible to think that le Bon Dieu will arrange it so that only people who have the material right to marry will meet. Do you imagine that He only has those meet who have just the right amount of money and just the right social position and the right love for each other? Oh, it's a joke that enough fools believe in without us."

"Then I am foolish," I interrupted. "At least I know what would be the outcome if we should still go on together. Cleodore, I care too much for you to let it go on along those lines. No, I couldn't make you my mistress."

For a moment I paused. Was I right, I asked myself. And then I saw what it meant if we should go on. The ruination of Cleodore, in all probability.

Surely I would not spoil her wholeness, the one thing that stood out above everything else, for a moment of realisation. No, my love for her was stronger than my desire. I faltered no more.

"No, Cleodore," I exclaimed, "I am sure that

I'm right. I am looking further ahead than you are. Some day, perhaps, you'll understand. But we must not see each other again."

Talking like this to Cleodore was breaking my heart. I noticed the old trembling of her lips and they seemed nearly to cry out their protest. I couldn't watch her suffer. I turned and walked away. In another instant, she too, had turned silently, and was gone. I felt a lump rise in my throat, I tried to call her back to me, then choked my thoughts down and settled into a settee.

This day had ever remained sacred in my memory. It was only marred by one thing. Loutie, I learned afterwards, had followed us, and been a witness of our meeting and our parting.

I arose from the park bench, perhaps an hour later. I was in a state of daze. I felt as if a spell had broken around me, but there was in my inner consciousness something that made me feel proud. I had made a great sacrifice, I realised, and knew that the days coming would bring with them a sense of irrevocable loss. Yet at the same time there was an ecstatic elation about my being that appeared to filter my soul of all its past

wrongs. Though suffering intensely, yet I felt happy and strangely peaceful.

As I write, I don't desire to give the impression that I did my duty to Cleodore out of pure unselfishness or that I wish to create a halo about my head. I am only trying to set down, as best I can, the peculiar state of mind into which my actions threw me. And it makes me happy, all over again.

I walked on. I remember that I tramped up to Grant's Tomb — and then back again, nearly oblivious to my surroundings or passing things. The scurrying of automobiles, the passing of carriages and people, seemed not of my world.

Late in the afternoon, I came to the cathedral on Fifth Avenue and went in, slowly — unconsciously. It was the first time in years that I had entered a place of worship, but I felt easily at home. Some sort of memorial service was going on, and I sat down in the last pews, subdued by a spirit of reverence, and sweet solitude.

My state of mind was peculiar. My heart responded like an echo to the spirit of the soft music that came to me. Seldom since has anything made

such an impression upon me, as did those great solemn tones of the organ that day. They were full of longing and again beautifully peaceful and harmonious. I found myself dwelling in a land of hope and dreams that soothed me compassionately, and thrust me into a scene of Nirvana-like yearning and desire.

I must have fallen into a soft sleep, when a verger, gently touching my arm, aroused me from my dreams.

Leaving the cathedral, I walked slowly home. The sun was just setting, buried in a fluffy cloud of golden red. The picture seemed complete. It was my imagination, of course, but as I stood on the edge of the curbing, studying the skies, and saw the sun sink into the horizon amidst what appeared like a bed of red and golden roses, it seemed to me a symbol of myself; and as it faded into oblivion with its beautiful glow, I repeated over in my mind, that it was glorious, like this, that I had made my sacrifice.

I knew that what I had done was right, and as I walked, I sighed over and over to myself: "Thank God, I did right."

CHAPTER XVI

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

BEYOND a doubt Larry loved me, and I him. Everything else seemed utterly unimportant. From the moment I sent for him after "La Bohème" I had only this one thought in my brain. It seemed to have been there half of my lifetime. It was, I think, about a week.

I did my work mechanically, dropping between whiles into dozes, thinking of him. I fell asleep and woke with his name in my breath. I do not know how I seemed to other people, to myself I was a different person.

It could not have lasted, I suppose. Other thoughts must have intruded, conscience, prudence, ordinary common sense have intervened. As it was, I remember that week always as the happiest of my life, and I think Larry too was happy.

At any rate, he was happy, if it was in my

power to make him so, for I was in a mood to deny him nothing. From the moment we were reunited on my doorstep that early morning, I realised that there was nothing I would not have done for him. Physically, I loved to have him hurt me as he did sometimes when he was savagely passionate. In less material things, I longed to have him demand sacrifices of me. But he asked very little.

I wondered at his forbearance. I felt as completely in his hands as if I had been a lifeless thing, I would not have made the most perfunctory resistance. But even during the time we were away in the country together, he asked nothing. In a way I was greatly astonished at this. Had I been in a mood for thought when I went away, I would have pictured a less conventional outcome for our trip.

Indeed it is rather comic to reflect on how I left New York with the expectation that I was to lose the world for love, and returned quite as innocent as I went. In a way I was deeply grateful to Larry for his forbearance, for he had said enough to show me that it was not for lack of de-

sire that things were as they were. But, nevertheless, I felt a little resentful; I had been ready to give, and my gift had not been asked for. And I felt, in my heart, a trifle ridiculous as well, as might a person who had gone forth with a mighty impulse to commit a murder and returned home with only a dead fly on his conscience. It would seem perhaps as if the moral side of the affair did not affect me. Indeed, it did not appear to be of great importance, for in my eyes to give oneself where one had given one's love looked not a question of morality or immorality, but of expediency or inexpediency. It might be that I was contemplating something foolish, but it simply did not look to me wrong, and I was so placed that I had only my own point of view to consider.

But after all, I did not think much, in those few happy days. As I look back on them I can see that my mind was nearly always befogged in a haze of joy and passion, that I lived altogether in emotion and except for a few flashing minutes, never once reflected on actualities.

When I was with Larry, I thought only of him, looked at him every instant and listened to his

voice without caring much what he said. When he was absent, I gave all my energy to trying to call back his image, to fancying that I could feel him near me. I used to close my eyes as I sat in front of my desk and imagine that his arms were around me and his breath in my face.

Ah, I was very weak, very foolish and very happy. And it was over so pitifully soon.

One morning when I had met him to have lunch, he told me quite suddenly that we must part.

I was appalled. He seemed so in earnest, there were tears in the corners of his eyes, and his hands and voice shook.

I thought him hysterical and tried to talk to him reasoningly to make him calm again. But soon I saw he was in his right senses, and barring his emotional state, perfectly sane.

We had not talked fifteen minutes when he turned and left me. His shoulders were quivering, and I, without in the least understanding our position, was as upset as he. I could not run after him, there in the square; already people were trying to notice our dishevelment and pecul-

iar behaviour. I went the other way. My brain was spinning. At the corner I took a Fifth Avenue motor 'bus and did not come to any realisation of where I was, till I had reached Fifty-ninth Street.

All the afternoon at the office I was stupefied, and made the oddest blunders. I sat at my desk after the rest of the staff had left for the day, looking at my ink-well and trying to think.

At last I sprang to my feet.

"Only two things matter," I cried, "I love him and he loves me. I will go to him and say so."

Larry lived on Third Avenue. I had never been there before, but the way was easy. I had only to walk straight east two blocks from the Metropolitan Building where my office was.

It was a muggy evening. The elevated trains running on close schedule made the air full of irritation. The place must have been quite at its worst. I came near to Larry's number. Everything seemed inexpressibly dreary. I could not conceive it possible that it was actually here that he lived. I looked about me in amazement. The

pavement was carpeted with dirty little children, women with sloppy figures leaned in doorways, and the men folk coming home from work smelt of beer and sweat.

The street was full of miserable sights. I saw a poor drunken woman with greasy hair. She had collapsed in front of a barber shop and two men in white coats were trying to lift her up and finally did heave her to her feet and the crowd laughed. The barbers shoved her across to a doorway and dropped her, and she pulled her torn dress across her dirty breast and pushed her hat from one ear to the other; and then went to pieces again.

A moment later I met a dreadful old woman of about sixty with paint thick in her wrinkles. It seemed as if a quarter of the people were deformed; club-footed men and bow-legged children jostled me at nearly every step.

Larry's was a corner house, and the entrance was in a side street. Just outside the door stood an ash tin with a pair of old corsets sticking out of it.

"Poor Larry, no wonder he is hysterical!" I

said to myself and went upstairs looking for his room.

I found him standing in the middle of the floor. I fancy he had just come in. He looked at me astonished and cried, "Why, Cleodore!"

I went and stood beside the window without speaking. It was a stifling, sticky night.

"I thought I would come and talk to you intelligently," I said. "This morning in Madison Square, we were both melodramatic and foolish. What is it, Larry, that's put this idea into your head that we must part forever?"

He looked at me dreamily. "Don't spoil everything. Since we must do it, let us do it finely — and quickly."

"I don't understand you, Larry," said I.

"You will later. You will understand and be grateful."

"Larry, you talk like a fool!" I cried. "You put your hand on your chest and murmur trash. Oh, my dear child — why can't we be happy? It would be so easy." I went over to him and put my hand on his shoulder. I could not think that at my touch and with me so close to

him he could still maintain this strange attitude.

But I was wrong. He merely turned his head away and stiffened his whole body.

"Don't," he said. "Be brave, Cleodore. We've got to do it."

"Why? What prevents our keeping on being friends?"

He hesitated.

"Friends — if we could be friends, it would be all right. But we can't. I ask you — can we?"

I stretched out my hands to him. "Oh, Larry, you talk so much!"

"My God! It's you who make me. Did I ask you to come here and prolong this discussion?"

I shrank back as if he had struck me. I could not believe that he really meant that we should part. It was inconceivable. He had seemed to care so sincerely.

"Cleodore," said he. "You must see after all how foolish this is. Here you are giving up everything, your chances of a peaceful, comfortable life —"

"I don't want a peaceful, comfortable life, I want you!"

"My dear child, when you've been six months married you will be glad we have done this."

"Six months married! Good God, Laurence, do you mean I am to marry Gordon, after this?"

"It would be the best thing," he said.

I flung out my arms and caught at the curtain. I was near falling to the ground with horror. I could not understand things at all, only that Larry was turning me away, inviting me to marry another man, that he would not let me touch him.

"Oh, Larry, how can you treat me so?" I cried. "Why don't you want me any more? I'm just the same. I'll do just what you say. Why must I go?"

I looked about the room piteously, trying to find in the air some argument to meet this incomprehensible cruelty. I saw on the end of the bed a feather scarf, pale blue. I looked at it, fascinated. Larry followed my eyes and then a queer look came into his face, half dismay, half relief.

I went over and picked it up. It had a smell of Trèfle Incarnate. I held it off and looked at it.

I saw one of the little feathers come loose and drift to the floor. Then I laid it back on the end of the bed carefully.

I started to say several things, some angry, some despairing, some bitterly matter-of-fact. After a long time I asked simply, "Have you a woman living here with you?"

Larry hesitated, came toward me with one hand out, then stopped and nodded.

"Who is she?"

"A waitress in Childs'."

"Do you love her?"

"Well, she suits me — and this."

"And I — wouldn't have, I suppose?"

"No, you don't fit into my life — oh, Cleodore, for God's sake, go away from here."

He caught me by the arm and hurried me to the door and down the stairs.

The street was full of rowdy looking people.

"I can't let you go alone. Someone might hurt you."

"Nobody can hurt me now," I said.

And there beside the ash-tin we parted. This was what this beautiful love of mine had led me

to, all my trust and passion outweighed by this waitress who smelled of Trèfle Incarnate; those wonderful moments of exaltation had reached their climax here in a hideous parting under the rattle of elevated trains, in the midst of drunken people and dirty-nosed children.

"Good-bye," he said, and I hurried away through the crowd silently.

It seemed only an instant before I was at home. I was panting, and, as I shut the door of my flat, I began to cry, not very loud, just a sort of moaning. I did not realise what had happened to me and felt as I fancy an animal might who had had a limb torn away.

There was nothing melodramatic nor picturesque about my grief. Perhaps for the first time in my life I was a real woman.

I set to work in a business-like way to put myself to bed. But everything seemed strange to my touch. I might never before have encountered those buttons and ribbons. My comb and brush had no familiarity to my hand. Blunderingly I felt my way out of my clothes and into a night-dress. I could not see much from crying.

I lay with my face flat against the pillow. I was shaking so that my teeth chattered.

"Larry, how can you treat me so? How can you?" I kept saying over and over to myself. I could not understand. There was surely a mistake somewhere. And then I remembered, remembered that hideous blue scarf, remembered Larry's dismissal, "You don't fit into my life." That was what he had told me.

I turned over, smoothed my hair away from my eyes and tried to control myself. And then, there came back to me the scene of a week before when I lay on the same pillow and counted Larry's fingers and looked at the fur on the back of his hand — only a week ago.

My little refrain started afresh: "Larry, how can you?"

I woke over and over in the night to say it; then fancied for just one happy moment that I had dreamed the whole thing, as one dreams sometimes that all one's teeth have fallen out, and then wakes to joyous cognisance that it is not so.

At daybreak, when only a few days before I

had called Larry to me, I got out of bed and knelt down to pray. It was utterly abject in me. I did it as I might have brought a gipsy's love charm, or a written letter to the person who answers unhappy lovers' questions in the yellow newspapers.

I was not religious; and even if I had been, would not, I think, have believed in the efficacy of a personal prayer for a specific thing. God might make me stronger and help me to stand against temptation, if one prayed Him to, but I do not believe that he considers prayers for special things, nor that it is intelligent to ask Him for the return of a lover or a diamond necklace. The Deity is not, I am sure, a Lost and Found Bureau. I fell asleep there on my knees, waking just in time to scramble back to bed as Clémentine came in to call me.

"Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle!" she cried aghast. "You are ill."

I blinked at her. "Give me the glass."

It was the sight of my face that quenched the first blaze of my grief. Never had I seen anything so terrifying. It was my own face, I sup-

pose; it must have been because it fitted on to my throat — otherwise I should not have known it for mine.

"Clémentine!" I cried. "Clémentine! look at me!"

"We will send for a doctor," said she, "ce brave Docteur Crewdon?"

"No, no!" I was on my feet. "I am not ill. Get me a cold bath, some black coffee."

At the office I had an especially busy day, and, as it happened, had to go that night to Chicago to have a talk with a troublesome author.

One does not indulge in obstreperous distress in a sleeping car, nor during business interviews, so for three days I practised self-control.

When the fourth came and I was again at home and free to break down, I had no wish to do so. I had not forgotten. But the first phase of my grief was past.

I kept hoping, like a fool, that I should have some word from Larry — a letter or a telephone message. I would not leave my flat in the evenings lest he might telephone or come to see me, and I miss him. Sometimes I stood half an hour

on end — staring into the ugly black face of the telephone as if I could hypnotise his voice to come out. If ever the bell rang I nearly fainted till I got the receiver down and heard — someone else.

Clémentine took unostentatious care of me, got me port to drink at lunch time on the plea that one needed to fortify oneself in these chill autumn days, made me a great deal of mutton broth, which is something I especially dislike, and insisted that I put on thick flannel underclothes although it was still of the mildest weather.

And so a fortnight passed, and then, one day, I had a cablegram from Gordon to say he was to reach New York in a week's time. I think I had almost forgotten his existence, and when I read the message I laughed bitterly at myself.

"This is the man, my dear, that you cried over in Paris not two months ago, the man you have promised to marry before Christmas — you had nearly forgotten he was alive!"

I did not meet him at the dock. I could not. I sent a note saying I would be at home that evening. I had little idea what I should say to him.

Since parting with Larry, I had given the fu-

ture small thought. When there is only one thing in the world that a body wants, and that she cannot have, there's little interest in considering what she will choose to take in its place.

But now, with Gordon in New York, I had to decide on something. Should I let things take their course, and marry him? Or should I tell him I had changed my mind? It did not seem to matter very much. To me I think that the question was quite honestly at that moment one of absolute indifference.

The idea occurred to me, however, of considering it from someone else's point of view. This was a thing I was not accustomed to doing. All my life I had been selfish in a comfortable, inoffensive way.

There was nobody to care what I did except Gordon — nobody in all the world, except dear old Clémentine, and a few doddering relations in Maryland.

And Gordon's point of view — that was plain enough. He had wanted me for years, he was pathetically happy at his final success. If I were

to send him away, I would be making him suffer, as I now was suffering.

That thought settled the question for me. No one should, through me, be made to be as miserable as I was.

And so, when Gordon came, I let him kiss me, asked him kind questions about his trip and his mother, smiled when he told me how greatly he had missed me. It was all a little mechanical, but Gordon was not one of those who notices. I was glad. It would make things much easier for us both.

"Isn't it wonderful, dearest, to think that we shall be married inside a month or so, and be together all our lives?" said he.

His choice of adjectives made it easy for me to say "yes."

"It might have been two years ago, if only you hadn't been such an obstinate little soul. You know, Cleodore, you've been in love with me all the time, haven't you?"

He had put me on a footstool beside his chair and as he spoke, caught me under the chin and looked at my face.

I laughed. "Do you think so?"

"Well, haven't you?"

I turned my head away, and suddenly his fatuousness disappeared.

"You love me now, don't you, Cleodore?"

I said "no" playfully. It was a lie in spirit for he believed, of course, that I meant "Yes."

"I wonder when you ever will love me?" he said in mock pathos.

"Peut-être jamais

"Peut-être demain

"Mais pas aujourd'hui

"C'est certain.' "— I hummed.

"Little devil!" said Gordon. And then, "Why haven't you written to me the last three weeks? I've been really worried."

"Why, I thought you would be coming home and would miss the letters."

"You can't have expected me to sail three weeks ago?" he objected.

"Yes, I thought you said so. I expected you a week before your cable came."

We had some argument about my mistake, I

contradicted myself a little, but Gordon set it down to feminine vagueness.

When he had gone away, a terrible self-disgust came over me. How I had lied, and twisted and smirked — there had been hardly a word I said, or a look of my face or one of my movements that had been sincere and truthful and spontaneous. I had done nothing but lie and lie and lie all the evening — and he so good and kind.

I hated myself.

Could one live all one's life in this way, I wondered? It looked as if I should have to, except that perhaps I should come eventually to believe my own lies. Many people did.

I sat on my feet in the big green arm-chair, and considered whether I should tell him the truth and leave it to him to decide if he would have me as things were. The idea appealed to me very much.

It would be so easy and simple to say, "Gordon, I do not love you — I love somebody else, but that's all over — do you want me to marry you and do the best I can?"

Was it not the only square thing to do? After all, an honourable woman would not marry a man who thought her pure, if she wasn't; and though I was honest enough in act, I was, in soul, far from being the innocent spinster Gordon pictured me.

It was due to no virtue of mine, I reflected bitterly, that I was still, technically, a pure woman.

The impulse to tell the truth to Gordon and to start clear with him was very strong. It was incalculably the easier way for me — but for Gordon?

Which would be better for him, to marry me thinking me what I was not, or to marry me knowing me as I was? There was only one answer. I must stand my punishment myself. How utterly foolish to say, "I am going to devote my blighted life to making you happy, and the first thing I shall do is gratuitously tell you something that cannot but make you miserable."

"It's a point of conduct, my dear," said I to myself as I fell asleep, "that you aren't capable to deal with. You're not accustomed to considering other people; unselfishness is as strange to

you as open air is to fishes. No wonder you don't know how to act."

I awoke terribly sad. The excitement of Gordon's coming had made me forget things for a little, but now I felt again worse than ever. Clémentine nearly wept when I would not touch even my coffee.

It was Saturday and Gordon had decided that we should have lunch together and then do some shopping.

I made an honest effort to be a bright, cheerful companion at lunch time, but I was so faint from lack of food that I could not eat; the band played selections from "La Bohème" that made me want to put my head down on the table and cry, and a man sitting near us took hold of his wine glass in exactly Larry's fashion.

Gordon worried over my lack of appetite. He was greatly concerned and wonderfully kind and irritating.

He fancied exercise would do me good so we walked from Thirty-fourth Street to the furniture shop in lower Broadway, where he thought we had best buy the simpler things we wanted for our

ménage. It was drizzling with rain — not enough to incommode a man, but the pavements were wet and I had to hold up my skirts. I was thoroughly uncomfortable, but in my mood of self-sacrifice would have felt it a disgrace to complain.

At the shop I smiled and looked down in a mechanical fashion and chose, without consciously seeing them, chairs and tables and sofas, and what not. Feminine instinct led me to affect a difficult taste and to spurn many of the offerings the young man set before us, but, as a matter of fact, I had no realisation of anything, and may, for all I can say now, or could have said then, have bought chairs covered with puce brocade and art nouveau dressing-tables inlaid in magenta.

I know that we chose what seemed an enormous number of things, and that Gordon ordered them to be held in the shop until he should send them word of our address.

By the time we had bought some table linen, it was well into the late afternoon.

"We shall have to put off getting the rugs, darling," said he.

"Yes," I agreed brightly, "but would it not be wiser anyway to wait till we see the shape of the rooms?"

Gordon was delighted with this remark. It was feminine and practical. He swore that my idea would never have occurred to him. "What fools we men are!"

"Perhaps we have been premature in getting all that furniture before we know where we are going to put it?" I ventured. I was trying so very, very hard, and I felt so far, far away from all these chairs and table cloths.

"Oh, I don't know. We didn't get anything that wouldn't fit in almost anywhere. And of course, if we find we have got something that is perfectly impossible, we can exchange it I suppose. I don't approve of exchanging things as a rule — it's a silly woman's trick. But, of course, if the things weren't satisfactory —"

"Oh, Gordon, don't!" I cried and caught his arm so close I think I hurt him, hard as he was.

"Don't what, dearest?"

"Oh, nothing."

"But, Cleo dear, what was it? You must tell

me. You can't clutch at people in that melodramatic way and then say 'Oh, nothing!' You'll have to be a reasonable little girl now you belong to me. Come, tell me what's the matter."

"I don't like to hear you talk about exchanging things — that are unsatisfactory."

"Lord, Cleo! you're a funny little soul," said he, in a kindlier tone. He could never be angry with me for very long when I was foolish. That woman's foolishness was after all the brightest gem in my diadem for him and I had no right to resent his point of view. I had let the gem shine for him for more than two years; had blinked admiringly at it myself. I thought of this and tried to smile with the old-time flattered pleasure. After all it was I who had taught him to think me "a funny little soul." Perhaps I was "a funny little soul." At any rate I should certainly grow to be one after I had been married a few years.

It was muddier than ever going home, but I was charmingly gay and silly; talked in a childishly practical view and amongst other things asked Gordon soberly whether three-fifths was

more or less than a half. It was a quotation from Bernard Shaw, but Gordon gave me all the credit and was delighted.

And then finally we had climbed the stairs and Clémentine had let us in and I had tossed aside my hat and dropped down in the green chair.

Gordon looked at me. He was going to be affectionate; and I made up my mind I would be kind and nice about it. But I felt so tired. I was sure I had a blister on one heel, and I had eaten nothing all day; and there'd been such a lot of mud and so many chairs.

I began to cry like a child; I scarcely noticed it at first and the tears collected slowly in my eye corners and rolled down my face before I had realised them.

I jumped up and walked with a fierce purposelessness across the room and back.

"Gordon!" I cried, "we can't go on like this."

"Now, my dear girl, don't start a scene merely because you starved yourself at lunch-time. You may as well realise first as last that I don't care for them. Your artistic friends may like to see

you tear about and to hear you talk like that. They're an anemic set and I suppose it braces them up to have a domestic circus going on all the time, but it isn't my idea of home life, not a bit of it."

Poor Gordon. I stroked his shoulder. That made it all right so far as he was concerned.

He began to talk to me in a kindly fashion although it annoyed him that I was tired and not in good form — except in moments of tenderness he was rather intolerant of weakness. He expected to be entertained, but the formula was a very easy one — vivacity and silliness, that was all.

To-night he was genuinely worried about me, and very gentle. Oh, the misery of receiving kindness from the wrong man when eyes and ears and heart are all calling out for the right one!

I was still crying intermittently, but in the dim room he had not noticed. Presently, I began to talk quietly, I did not know what I was going to say when I started; as I went on I realised that all unconsciously I had met the temptation that hung over me and had yielded to it.

"Gordon, you asked me yesterday if I loved you. Shall I tell you the truth?"

"Why, little girl, how solemn you look!" said he. "Of course, tell me the truth — all of it, if a humbug like you can."

"Well then, I don't love you. I never have. But I will marry you, if you like, and try to be a good wife."

"Really, Cleo, dear, you mustn't talk this way. You are much too fond of scenes. Of course, you love me; only you're excited at seeing me again and it's made you nervous and imaginative."

"Have you loved other people besides me, Gordon?" I asked.

"Nothing that need worry you, dearest," said he. "Of course, every man has his notions, but it's all over long ago with me. I've never thought twice about any other girl, since I first met you. That's the truth. And you, little girl?"

I think he fancied I had some girlish confession to make and wanted to help me over it.

Even then I wondered if I should not smooth

over the incident, and leave him with his confidence unshaken. I sat silent, thinking.

"Well, Cleo, am I the only man? Has there been another?" He smiled as he said it.

I bowed my head. "It's only right to tell you, Gordon. Nobody else will ever matter as he did."

Gordon caught my hand. "Do you mean that? Or is it one of your jokes to tease me?"

"It's true. You told me to tell the truth."

"But I never thought it would be like this."

"If you had, I suppose you would not have urged me to be truthful," said I lightly, in a feeble effort to gain a minute's grace.

"Who was this man?"

"It doesn't matter now. I shall never see him again. It's all over."

"Are you sure? Quite sure?" Gordon had both my hands. "How long has it been over?"

Suddenly — it was as unexpected to me as to poor Gordon — I flung back my head and laughed. "About two weeks!" said I.

Gordon jumped to his feet. "What do you mean? Two weeks! Are you crazy?"

"Very nearly," said I. "If you will go away now, I will write you and tell you all about it and then you can do as you like. I don't want to talk about it."

"You don't want to talk about it! Well, I do. You, my affianced wife for months, tell me that you parted two weeks ago with the only man you ever loved, and then you say 'go away and I'll send you the details by post.' We'll have them now, please."

"All right," said I. "I met a man last spring and I fought against caring for him as hard as I could fight, and finally I couldn't fight any more. That's all. It's all over now, quite over."

"Why?"

I got up off my footstool. "He didn't want me," I said.

"Great God!" cried Gordon. "So it's this chap's leavings you are offering me?"

"You are not compelled to take them, my friend," I reminded him.

"Do you realise what you have done, Cleo?" he asked. "You became engaged to me, and within a week or so, you got yourself involved

with this man and now — when he has turned you down, you come to me and say sweetly, 'I suppose you don't mind!' I never heard of such conduct. You must be mad!"

"Oh, no, I am not. I wish I was. I am only miserable. I know how badly I've treated you. Don't think I don't. But I've been punished. I'm very unhappy, Gordon."

"I hope you are!" said he.

He walked up and down, talking angrily. How ugly people look in anger; what stupidly brutal things they say! I tried not to hear him.

At last I spoke myself. "I know I have been wicked and weak and selfish," I said, "and I wish you could forgive me. But you have been foolish, too. You fell in love with me, and you wanted me and thought no more of my point of view than if I were something in a shop. I refused over and over again when you asked me to marry you; and last summer before I went abroad I told you I never wanted to see you again. Yet you came with me, forced yourself on me, played on my weakness and loneliness on the ship, and got me to consent to marry you. You are not

utterly a fool, Gordon. You know I didn't love you, and then I ran away from you, but there in Paris you took me back. Why, even now, if I were to say, I'll marry you, knowing I love someone else, you would do it; and then you'd blame me for our failure afterwards. Oh, you're strong, Gordon, and you should have taken better care of me. You, in your way, have been as selfish and as wicked as I. I forgive you — can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, forgive you, great God, you've got the nerve to stand there and taunt me like this! Do you think I'm a fool? Forgive you — I would to heaven I had forgotten you two years ago." He paced back and forth across the room, shoving aside the furniture as it came in his path.

"Well, I'll tell you, little woman," he flung out savagely, "here's what it comes to. You can come live with me — if you want to. You are no better than some other women I know."

Then he went out and shut the door hard, very hard. "Ah," I reflected, "in his place I would have closed it softly. He is very commonplace,

is Gordon. Poor Gordon. But he won't suffer as I did. He has treated me not too well, and that will make him dislike me, so it will be easy for him. . . . And I, well, I'm no worse off than I was before. I couldn't be."

I looked about the room. It had that expression that rooms, like people, have after a scene. The chairs were pushed aside as Gordon had shoved them out of his way; the curtain was crushed back, where I had leaned in its folds to hide myself from the sight of his angry face and the sound of his angry voice.

I picked a cigarette out of its box. Gordon did not care for women smoking.

"Well, Cleodore," said I to myself with a laugh. "You seem to have made a pretty thorough mess of your life so far."

CHAPTER XVII

[BY LAURENCE CREWDON]

IT is a mockery of Heaven that what was perhaps the finest of my few good deeds should have brought only misery to her for whom I did it, and should have driven from me the simple little soul who had trusted me. Abandoning Cleodore — God, how hard it was to do! And she, dear woman, deliberately made it harder.

I had just come back to my room, still dazed by our parting in Madison Square, when I heard a skirt swish in the hall.

"It's Loutie," said I to myself with a sigh. I longed for solitude.

Then I heard a knock. So it was not Loutie. I went and opened the door. Cleodore was standing there.

"Cleodore, Good Lord!" I cried, "what are you doing here? How did you find this place?"

We were silent for a moment, and then I asked her why she had come.

"To make you see things sensibly," she answered. "You're acting crazily — and nothing else."

"Poor child!" I thought, as I found her trembling hand on my shoulder and her unhappy, puzzled eyes looking into mine. "You don't understand, Cleodore," I said, "I wish you would."

Then I came near telling her the same thing, all over again. I came near to telling her how I loved her too much to marry her into such a hole, and loved her too much to make her my mistress. I might have drawn her closer to me — I longed to and I would have, I daresay, but for Loutie; — not that I feared that Loutie might come in, but rather because I was living with her here in this room. The sordid absurdity of it brought my will back to me.

Cleodore moved from me and went over to the window. I could see that the fingers that rested on the sill were white from pressure, and that her breast rose and sank nervously and irregularly. How I loved her at that moment! It was all I could do to keep from taking her in my

arms and telling her that I was wrong after all and would not let her go.

Then she turned to face me directly and talked in a wonderfully gentle way, and with a dignity and sincerity that made it very hard to stay by my resolution.

"I realise you are trying to make a sacrifice for me," she said, "and I don't want you to do it. Larry, can't you see? I'll do anything you tell me except say good-bye. Don't make me do that."

And then, somehow, she came to know about Loutie. We did not speak her name, or discuss the matter. To me Loutie seemed a thousand miles away, but I tried to make her real to Cleodore. I knew it would drive her away from me, and every moment she stayed showed me more clearly how necessary our parting was, and how hateful. How I kept my strength of purpose with her there before me, I do not know.

At last, she left me; and as I closed the door at the foot of the stairway, a pang of misery shot through me, from head to foot, and shocked my being.

For a long time after I sat quietly in the darkness of the room. Across the street below, a drunken man was reeling into the doorway of a saloon — a fruit vender was closing up his little wagon shop, and talking to an organ grinder in heated tones. They were gesticulating wildly.

I heard a tune start up on the hand organ. It affected me strangely. The music seemed to go into me, instead of stopping at my ears. Before I knew I was repeating the "Boola" song of my old college days.

It took me back through the years. I saw myself in my room and remembered the last time I had listened to the same appeal to my heart strings. I recalled a little group and a piano in a dark corner — rolling out the thrilling air of sweet, fading, student days.

It was so long ago now, but "Boola" had never left me. The notes that cracked out from the organ took me back a good many years.

"How easily one goes down," I said again and again to myself, as I looked about me.

I hardly heard Loutie, as she entered the door, and she brought me out of my reverie with a jerk.

I could not speak to the poor girl. I longed to be alone.

"Why don't you talk?" she asked.

She spoke angrily and disturbed me more than ever.

"I don't feel like talking this evening," I said simply.

"Huh! You don't, well, you don't have to." And she put on her hat again and left me.

A half hour after she had gone, I found my solitude intolerable. For a time I moved restlessly about the room, thinking, recapitulating, and then I went downstairs to Gayac.

"You are miserable, yes?" said Gayac, as soon as he saw me.

"Yes, Gayac," I answered. "Life's pretty hard," and then I asked for one of his French cigarettes, and smoked for a few minutes.

"Oh, Monsieur, you are so foolish," he began. "You make love — like a monkey. Yes. You are like all the Americans. You make love with the heart and wear out the head."

"You know how, I suppose?" I said banteringly.

"Yes, I know how. It is not difficult. To the woman we love we say pretty things. Then all is well.

"'Aux hommes l'amour vient par les yeux,

"Aux femmes par les oreilles,'" he hummed.

"You see, Monsieur Larry, it is not new to us. Men love through the eyes; women by the ears; ah, it is true, very true."

After resting for a while and hearing nearly the whole of Gayac's repertoire of philosophies, I went back upstairs.

My mind was full of contemplation. I could not help thinking how easy it is to change the entire current of a life by the saying of a few words, and how difficult it always is to get what we want.

"What good is life," I argued, "if we can have only that for which we do not care? Or must else suffer for the good things we take?"

Loutie was late again the next evening.

"Dreaming?" she said to me as she came in.

"No," I answered, "why are you so late?"

"Oh, am I late? Yes, I guess I am a little later than usual. But I've got a pretty good reason. I lost my job."

"You lost your job."

"Yes."

"Good Heavens," I cried.

"Well, it's true."

"Loutie, I can't believe you."

"It's true," she answered carelessly.

I noticed her face. It was hard set, with none of the old sympathy in it. I thought at first it might be suppressed emotion, then I saw her mouth curve into a half cynical smile.

"You're not taking it very hard," said I. "You don't seem very unhappy over it."

"Oh, what's the use," she answered. "Life is too short."

"Loutie," I exclaimed. "You — are you joking about this? Tell me the truth."

"Well, I've told you," she repeated nonchalantly. "I've lost my job."

"But, Loutie, can't you realise?"

"Yes, it is a shame," she came back.

I couldn't understand — Loutie, always so sweet and gentle, to be rough and common like a woman of the streets bent on vengeance. I saw hard lines in her face that were utterly

new to me. Then I asked her how the job had gone.

"Oh, he got fresh," she replied. "Wanted me to go out with him. The old fool."

"Who wanted you?"

"Who? Why, the manager, who else do you suppose would?"

"Well, why"—we were staring hard at each other—"why didn't you play him along a bit? It would have given you time to look about for a new job."

"You mean that I should do that—go with him, for your sake. Oh! you, you dirty dog!" She had flared up and taken a meaning, such as had never entered my thoughts.

"Loutie, take care," I answered angrily. "You are acting like—well, not like yourself. You know I didn't mean that."

"Oh, you're not so far above it," she answered bitterly.

"I? Why, I don't understand you! Quick, tell me what you mean."

"Well, I have reasons for saying what I do," she replied.

"You have reasons. What? Tell me."

For an instant she eyed me furiously. Then she broke out in a tempest of anger, stamping her little foot and pounding the table with her clenched fists.

"I saw you," she stormed. "I saw you and followed you yesterday. And I know everything. You thought you could play two games at once, didn't you? Well, you can go to your stuck up fairy. I suppose I'm not good enough. Ain't got the clothes. When you wanted me I came, but I suppose I'm not the right sort — only when I'm needed.

"I know now where you was the night you left me — and then came in with a lame excuse about walking the streets all night. Oh, I feel sorry for you . . . you. . . .

"Yes, you can go to her all right. I've made some arrangements of my own since yesterday."

Then she took a little picture out of her pocket-book.

"See this picture," she said. "Well, I've made up my mind. I don't care for him like I did for you — but he's got money and is a good

spender — and wants to spend it on me. Oh, I've made up my mind. What's the use. Love, companionship — God! It's a joke and I'm not going to cry my head off about it. Girls like me ain't got no chance, anyhow.

"I'm going to Europe in a few days, maybe. You can look me up on the passenger lists. Mrs. Jerry Sheehan. That ain't his name quite but it's pretty near — and will serve the purpose. He told me not to tell.

"Yes, he's got the dough and what do I care anyway, now." Then she suddenly drew herself up to her fullest height and her voice cracked out, coarse and strained. "Why, I am just beginning to realise it. Do you know what you've done to me?" She glared at me threateningly. "Well, I'll tell you. You've taken everything I could give you, you've taken away everything that I used to have to make me happy. You've spoiled me for anyone else with your fool ideas about life and things. And what have you given me? Why, you ain't ever cared for me and you know it. I've been hanging around you trying to keep you encouraged — Oh, I know it's only

been for a few days, but I'd of kept it up. And you've never yet kissed me and meant it. I see it all now. You've played with me, you've made a fool out of me. And I — I swallowed it whole. Oh, I hate you, I hate you."

In another instant I found her little clenched fist in my face. She tried to tear the flesh of my cheeks in her astonishing frenzy; and as I held her off, she managed to loosen her right hand from my grasp, and pound my face viciously. Then, as she saw that I made no resistance, she burst into hysterical tears.

I had listened to her storm of words, sadly enough. All the bitter invectives that hard luck had stirred up in her little body had belched forth like a tumultuous upheaval.

At first I tried to explain but I saw it was too late. Then I made up my mind not to. It was a good way to end everything. The book with its months of concentrated labour was gone; I had sent Cleodore away. There was one thing left that I could see. And what difference was there if it was delayed a day or a month.

I couldn't look at Loutie when she finished

to bed? Well, you can see her this time, with my willing permission."

It was daybreak when I crawled back up the wooden stairs. Passing the first floor landing, a whining dog, that had probably been out all night, took my mind from myself. An ill omen, I thought, in subconscious fashion, and turned my steps to my room.

As I gained the hall, I saw the door of the room was open. Instinctively I concluded that Loutie had left. Then I went on mechanically. On the table lay a folded note.

"Larry, I am leaving you," I read. "You don't care for me and we're in such hard lines, it's no use for us to be fools. I am writing this about midnight. I called Sheehan up over the phone about an hour ago, and he is standing by me now, as I write this.

"This is all for the best. I am sorry that we ever met, for your own sake. You would never have lost that manuscript of your book if it hadn't been for me. So I guess it's all for the best. — Loutie.

"P. S. Enclosed is twenty dollars. That

ought to keep things going until you can find a job or something. I owe it to you, anyway. I tried to make him give me more, but he won't do it." . . .

. . . It seems to me now, as I look back, that something in me gave way, when I read that note, and saw the money lying before me. The sight of it given me — as to a beggar — battered down all my resistance. It was a help, yes — but only to push me to a quicker realisation of my fate. And as one in drunken tremors runs from the countless reptiles that pursue him, so did I find no rest until the yellow piece of paper lay torn to a thousand bits.

And as I pondered, each bit of the bill seemed to take life and resemble some incident, some happening of the past.

It was the end, I thought. I found a certain peace in tearing up the yellow money, and as I laboured at my sordid occupation, I was impressed more than ever before by the infinitesimality of the human being.

"We think life so much," I thought incoherently —" and here are the things that kept me

wanting to live — and there was so little that was happiness in them."

Everything passed kaleidoscopically before me. I saw that when the future came, it was always the present at the end; with the same unsatisfied yearning and ambition.

I counted back over the years — and saw that I amounted to nothing. As one thinks over an entire life in that fraction of a moment that lies between health and some fatal accident, so did I seem to run over the days and weeks, seeing all the past incidents clearly, feeling all their bitter pains and few pleasures as vividly as at the time of their activity. It was like running over the pages of a book — and stopping at the dog-eared leaves.

I amounted to nothing in the world's makeup. After all my struggling, only two or three people were aware of my suffering, or my existence, even. The idea amazed me. It became even picturesque. And how I had fooled myself! . . .

Outside my window, the trains seemed to rattle by, faster and more noisily than ever. I heard

the Frenchman and his wife, downstairs, over their morning dishes.

Down on the street a newsboy's shrill voice announced another sensation. I listened for the details, but his voice faded away in the distance and became conglomerate with the noise of the street.

The noise itself came up from below and affected me strangely. The acute sounds seemed to have gone, and were all combined into a common mass that came to me like a purring rumble, from off in the distance. It was the kind of crushed silence that one would liken to the sound of overwhelming things.

Then I noticed that my sensations appeared benumbed into a strange kind of resignation. I had no longer the ability for acute human pain. There was no longer any agony of mind. A sort of dull aching, narcotic-like, seemed to have taken its place in my voluntary movements and I was apparently crushed into a silent acquiescence. I had been drinking, but surely not enough to make me feel so queerly.

And then I began to feel that I had entered

some pleasing land of dreams, where everything was soft and sweet scented. I seemed to float along in the atmosphere I breathed.

Vaguely I saw lying at my feet a piece of broken mirror. I strained and looked, and realised that I was trying, and yet I was unable to see myself.

I recall going closer to the window and drawing a chair up to the sill.

I remember that I sat there till the sun came brightly in my face — and until it was dark again.

. . . . . .

It was Gayac who brought me back to being one of the earth again.

At first a wrenching, throbbing grasp at my nerves, then came the instinctive feeling of an awakening when someone is near, and I saw a figure over me as I sat, fingers clutching at my shoulders, with a face all terrified and distorted with anxiety and fear.

It was Gayac half crying and pleading and then seeming to laugh with hysterical joy as I opened my eyes.

For a time I was completely bewildered.

Then I realised in a vague, indistinct sort of way, what had been my condition. And strangely it was I who uttered the first frightened words.

"Gayac, Gayac! Tell me, am I all right?" I cried at last. He told me afterwards that I had looked at him stupidly for an hour before a word had come from my lips.

Dear Gayac. He heard my words with tears.

I heard him tell me how they had tried my door the day before, thinking I was out; and fearing something had happened, they had sat up all of the second night, awaiting my return.

And then he told me that he had persuaded his wife into agreeing with him that I must be ill, or dead, and how he had broken open the door to find out.

"Oh, Monsieur Larry," he went on, "it is strange, very, very strange. For how many days you have sat here, I don't know. Perhaps two." And then—"Yes, it is terrible. You look like a ghost. Yes, you look very bad. But now I am so happy, my little boy."

After all, death cannot be as repellant as it is pictured, for while he was going over the details

of my awakening, I felt a certain deep resentment gather force within me that I had not died.

Everything was painful again. The light pierced my eyes like so many darts, my head and body felt sore and bruised and my senses, which had seemed to have flown from me, came back now, separate and distinct, and each with its own special pain of realisation. I rediscovered all my worldly assets.

My blurred sensibilities came back only slowly that afternoon and it was hours before I could come to comprehend.

But it was as he said: for two days I had been the lethargic occupant of my chair by the window, and in that time I had not made one voluntary movement.

It seemed difficult to believe and even now, after having studied the case, I do not entirely understand it. It was surely true, however, for as I took stock of myself, I saw the verification of it everywhere — full grown beard, feet and ankles swollen from the pressure of my shoes and laces, and a sad, gaunt face with such unnatural lines as to frighten me.

I was put into bed in a little room back of Gayac's shop, and I stayed there for many weeks. They fed and waited on me like samaritanic angels and I lay there and God blessed them a hundred times a day.

At last I became strong enough to leave the bed. They propped me up in a chair overlooking the street, and I spent a few weeks more in this manner. It took me long to heal it seemed.

"God repairs the damage to his own structures, but injury to the heart and soul are caused by ourselves," said Gayac one day to me, in one of his philosophical wanderings.

Under my breath, I remember that I remarked to myself that we indeed were very poor menders.

We had many good talks during this time and I came to understand Gayac better than ever. Of course I told him everything. It was good for me, and I emptied myself of all the miserable disappointments that had occupied my thoughts for months. I told him about the lost manuscript, about Loutie and my great love for Cleodore; how I wished that I could have earned only

enough to support us. "There would have been one happy marriage at least," said I. Then I went over again the sacrifice I had made and how I regretted it, but had tried to stay strong for her sake.

He sympathised deeply and let me pour out the burning words and resentful disappointments with equal encouragement and attention.

And when I talked of my love affairs he was always the same, trying to cheer me and feel with me, and again banteringly playful with my sentiments.

"Poor Larry," he would say, "we are both of us unfortunate. You, because you are single and I — because I'm married."

My days in bed brought me one thing at least — resolutions.

I suppose that more new resolutions are made upon the sick bed than on any New Year's eve. Life shows itself in all its truth then and valuation is put for the first time on good health and peace of mind. And so, during my last day in bed, I remember becoming lost in a flood of new resolve. I would forget Loutie, my lost book,

Cleodore even — and with what fragments remained I would start anew.

A light snow had fallen during the night, covering with whiteness the dirty streets and walks. It was the first snow of the season and I recall remarking to myself that it was a coating of whitewash for my past weaknesses.

CHAPTER XVIII

[BY CLEODORE BLAKE]

ONE day in early October a fit of reckless courage came over me. Larry had turned me off, Gordon would have none of me, my life lay in ruins about me. Things could not be worse, so why not try to make them better?

It all came about from my looking consciously in the glass for I think the first time since the day when I parted with Larry. Of course I had seen my reflection many times each day, one must tidy one's hair and smooth one's eyebrows, even if the heavens fall. But up till now I had seen the mirrored face without recognition or interest.

" Curious you have not changed," said I to myself. I thought of the lonely evenings I had spent, of the nights when first I could not sleep, and then feared to wake and lose my happy dreams. I remembered all the bitterness I had held in my heart — I had not been a resigned and Christian sufferer.

But of all this I saw no trace in the mirror. The discovery gave me infinite comfort. I looked and looked. My eyes were the same, they had always looked sad, but there was colour in my face and my mouth didn't droop and my cheeks had not fallen in.

I began to laugh.

It was a brisk day, with sunshine everywhere, the electric sunshine of late autumn. A patch of it lay along the corner of my dressing table, and I moved into it and began to make up a story to myself all about how suddenly the telephone bell would ring, and it would be Larry, and he would say he was on his way to come see me, and I would rush into a pretty dress, and — I went on for fully an hour, he and I were hoeing cabbages together in Normandy before I roused myself.

I started to write, still day-dreaming. I suppose we all of us write letters which even as we write them, we never mean to send. This was such a one: —

"Do you ever dream about me? I think you must; perhaps we both are dreaming at the same

time, and, when I wake so happy, it means that we have really been together. The dreams are so real, I think it must be like that.

"I had one just now. It was very commonplace, just that you rang the telephone bell and said you were coming, and I was waiting at the head of the stairs and heard your steps from the minute you got inside the front door, first little steps, and they got bigger and bigger until at last I saw you. And you said quite cheerfully, 'Oh, child, what fools we've been!' Would it not be wonderful if, while I was dreaming that, you had dreamed your half.

"Couldn't we make it true, Larry? Couldn't we let the two dream people be happy? They say dreams only last the fraction of a minute. Surely it would not be wrong if we were to be together for only that long?

"Couldn't we make it true. The telephone bell and the little steps getting bigger and bigger and you saying, 'What fools we've been!'—couldn't we just for once?"

I read it over and wondered what Larry would say if I should really send it to him. Did he ever

think of me? Had he suffered? I hoped that he had not; I had never wished him to suffer. But, of course, he had.

I wrote again, pushing the childish effusion aside: —

"Dear Larry, is it quite out of the question that we should meet again? I have been very unhappy, so have you I am sure. Could we not meet just once? Perhaps it's rather abject of me to ask it, after what you did. But I have no pride — with you. Or rather, this is my only pride, that I will not *pretend*. If you will do what I ask this once, I promise not to ask it ever again."

I read over this second letter. After all, why not? What possible harm would I do in sending it? And suppose he did come — suppose the telephone bell did ring, the steps did grow bigger — I pretended to myself that I could feel his hand, and hear him talking, could see him move across my rooms.

I put on my hat and coat and went out with the letter in my hand.

I could not quite bring myself to post it. One

minute I asked myself why in Heaven's name I had not written such a letter weeks ago, the next I was aghast that I should for a moment be seeking after the man who had discarded me. My brain fluttered between one point of view and another, diametrically different. I could never think coherently on any subject that lay close to my heart.

As I walked along thinking, I came presently to the corner of Madison Square where there is that imposing stone bench affair with a statue of Farragut on top. Often before in passing, I had noticed this edifice and wondered why nobody ever sat on the bench, so now I wandered toward it whimsically and placed myself there,— perhaps the first person who had ventured to sit there, ever since the monument was erected.

From my post I surveyed Fifth Avenue with its Saturday afternoon crowd. Suddenly the throng parted and, half a block uptown, I saw coming towards me a woman with something blue about her throat. I watched her as she walked along, a plump, commonplace creature, and as I looked, I could feel my eyes start, and my breath stiffen.

She was wearing a blue feather scarf like that I had seen in Larry's room.

I jumped to my feet and stared at her. I did not know whether it was that scarf or not, whether she was Larry's woman or some other. I fancied it was someone else. This woman was well past first youth. But at any rate, the miserable ornament, no matter who its wearer was, spoke to me, clearly, brought me to my senses in a flash.

I watched the woman out of sight till her brown dressed figure and the blue line about her shoulders were lost in the crowd. Then I remembered my letter and sat with my elbows on my knees, looking at it for many minutes. At last I tore it slowly into pieces and dropped them on the ground.

"Thank God! Oh, thank God, I didn't post it!" said I, and then, after a moment I rose and went home.

"Mon amie," I said to myself bitterly, "will you never understand the truth? This episode is over."

As I went through the hall, I caught sight of my reflection. It seemed to me that I did now

look different from my old self, but I was not greatly interested. After all, what did it matter how I looked, or what I did, or whether I did anything at all? Was I not absolutely superfluous? Of what use was I to any human creature?

I kept seeing that blue scarf in my mind's eye and shuddering at the memory of it. What a hideous thing it was! I reflected that this woman of Larry's must be a pretty creature to afford to wear it. But, naturally, she would be pretty — pretty and simple and easy to get on with, physically satisfactory and nothing else.

That was the sort of woman Larry wanted, poor, overwrought lad; no wonder I, with my unending talk, my upsetting behaviour and my comparative paucity of physical charms had not satisfied him for long.

I remembered a story he had told me of a former patient of his, a woman who was breaking her heart because of her husband's indifference. The husband had loved her for her mental qualities, and she had insisted on the physical side. I had agreed, when Larry told me this story,

that the poor woman had acted very foolishly and yet I, in my turn, had not been content to be Egeria, confidante, Muse. I must need apply for the post of mistress and there I had been rejected for a waitress in Childs'.

I thought of these things without great bitterness; and certainly with no special ill will towards the girl herself. It was the fact of Larry's failing me that mattered, I had no emotion to waste on the cause of it all. And then, was she the cause? Alas, no — if Larry had deserted me, it was I, and I alone who was to blame.

It was I who had failed him, somehow. I deserved my fate, and had got from life exactly what I put into it. I had been stupid and vain and unable to recognise the real things when I met them. When in Larry's arms last summer I had felt the world swing round, had I said, "This is happiness and I mean to cling to it?" Not a bit of it. I had acted like a fool, mistaken the purest and noblest thing in my life for a cheap infatuation and treated ill the only creature on earth who mattered to me.

No wonder I lost good things, if I had not the

sense even to know them when I saw them. Oh, I had been a fool — a wicked, wicked fool. There was something almost grotesque in the way I had mismanaged things for myself.

Would they give me another chance, I wondered? I did not know if I wanted another chance; indeed I was sure that I did not. There was only one thing I wanted — or that was how I felt a large part of the time.

But then there would come days when my mood was different and when I felt that I was getting to be a sentimental fool. Of course, this thing had hit me, I admitted that, but didn't we all get hit now and then? And wasn't I taking the blow rather hysterically?

"After all, my dear," said I to myself, "if you loved this impecunious young man so dearly that now your life is over because he scorns you, isn't it rather peculiar that you bade him 'Goodbye' at the height of his passion and went off to Europe and became engaged to someone else?"

In these moods I would argue with myself and take the cynical tone of a scheming mamma in a society novel. I would tell myself I was well

free of Larry and a subject for congratulations,—and then I would look about my little room so full of his memories and know that I had lied.

Ah, I wanted him so. Nothing made a difference; I could be cynical with myself, I could be bitter about this other woman for whom he'd thrown me over, I could try to fool myself with a dozen lies, but always I woke in the morning thinking of him and of how much I wanted him.

And yet, unhappy as I was during all this time, curiously enough I never even thought of killing myself. I had literally nothing to live for, but it never seemed to occur to me that I had the power to cease to live. I fancy that my distress was too real for any such melodramatic notions to enter my mind.

At any rate, I continued in the usual routine without a break. There were mornings after bad nights when breakfast bore a repellant aspect, but on the whole I ate and slept with moderate success. And I worked like a horse. At my office they were delighted with me.

"I never supposed you had it in you," said the chief. "You know I took you on here largely on

your father's account, and I don't mind confessing I never expected to be able to keep you. A less practical looking creature than you seemed that first day you came to call on me in your long crêpe veil, I never saw. But you're doing capitally, capitally."

They raised my salary. The only thing I could think of to do by way of celebration was to buy Clémentine a new dress.

I gave quite a number of presents in those days. It afforded me a certain satisfaction, and it gave me something to do. I used to try to buy something or other, every day. This kept me busy between the time I left the office and the coming on of the evening.

I do not know why it was, but these moments of autumn twilight were the hardest for me to bear. My flat seemed so lonely and sad when I came into it; and the hour or so till dinner-time full of terrible melancholy.

So I drifted into the habit of going into the shops at this time and stopping until they closed. I did not buy many things for myself. I very seldom saw anything I wanted. But I went over

and over through the names of my acquaintances trying to think of persons to whom I could make little gifts, and then spent an hour perhaps searching for exactly the right thing. Then, if it was not yet time when I got home to bathe and put on a tea-gown I could keep myself going in the writing of a note to go with my present, in wrapping it up in tissue paper and addressing the parcel.

Thanks to this absurd habit I did not find myself much better off for my raise of salary. I had used to think that a little more money would make all the difference to me, but now that I had it, I could not even find a personal use of it. I did not care to save because that made me think of the future — the dreadful future of one who has nothing to which to look forward. I did not want clothes — I had a decent tailor-made office frock and a tea-gown for the evenings and all my trousseau lingerie. I used to laugh whenever I put on a piece of it. I did not wish to go to theatres or to the opera, for either I found myself bored or else emotionally excited. The only extravagance I might logically have allowed myself was to change my lunching place.

I don't know why I did not do this. "Le Petit Trou" was not an attractive restaurant and the food, though it had a certain piquant and fearsome interest, was often unpalatable. But from inertia I continued to go there at noon time nearly every day.

I grew to be one of the features of the place, sitting at my table in my corner, with a bunch of papers or some poor author's manuscript propped up against the little wine bottle. And in the course of time I got on nodding terms with the other features of the place, and became in a casual fashion well acquainted with Schreiber.

He had, in social matters, the skin of an animal, and being always inclined to talk himself, did not conceive it possible that others might be inclined to silence. I finally told him that unless I cast a really glittering smile at him, he was to understand that I preferred my table to myself.

"What an odd woman you are!" said he, and was so pleasant in return for my rudeness, that next day I smiled my brightest. It was, I fancy, the crucial smile of my life — but of course I did not realise it then.

Schreiber came over bubbling with talk. "Strange thing happened to-day," said he. "If Mr. Shorter wasn't so awfully dignified we could make some bully ads. out of it. As it is, he is furious."

I looked inquiring, as was expected of me.

"Well, you see, about a month ago a chap came into the office and sent in his name to Mr. Shorter. Of course Mr. Shorter wouldn't see him. He only sees royalty by appointment. So I went out. The usual chap with a parcel under his arm — and he was poorer looking than most, might have been a small shop-keeper from his get up and manner.

"'Do you buy books?' says he.

"'Sometimes we do,' said I.

"'How much do you pay for 'em?' he asked.

"I told him that depended on the book. I asked him if he'd written it himself.

"'No, a friend wrote it,' he told me, and I thought he hesitated a bit.

"So I took the manuscript and turned it over to our lowest reader. He said it was no good. He was so emphatic about it, I turned it over to

one of the good men, and he came in to see me next day wild with excitement about it. It was rotten, he said — you know Dowling's way?"

I nodded.

"It was the worst written book you could think of, all the rules of style and construction ignored — and it was superb — superb, sir! — wonder who the author is."

"So then I read it. And I tell you, it's the stuff. It's a big book and no mistake, all about one man, realistic — the sort of thing the Russian chaps do, only put right here in New York with all the details we all know. The man can't write, but he knows — and any fifteen dollar a week stenographer can unsplit his infinitives and mark in the paragraphs for him."

"That sounds good," said I. Schreiber bored me. I was beginning to regret my smile.

"Oh, that's not the whole story," said he. "There's a bit of comedy and a bit of tragedy coming. I don't know if we shall be able to publish the book after all."

"Too realistic for Mr. Shorter's non-conformist conscience?" I asked.

"No—it's a bit high in spots, but Mr. Shorter says he'll stand for it. The trouble is, we can't find the author. Of course, as soon as Mr. Shorter had read it, he told me to send for the shop-keeper person and I did. Shorter told me to see him and find out where the author was, and get him to come round.

"'So you want the book?' said our friend. 'What'll you pay for it? Will you give me a hundred dollars?'

"'Lord!' said I to myself. Then I told him we would prefer to make the arrangements with the author in person.

"The little chap began to squirm. 'It's impossible,' he cried, 'my friend is ill, he is in Chicago, it's impossible.'

"I thought our little man was acting rather queer, but I said 'all right. I'll ask Mr. Shorter to speak to you. I suppose if you can show us a note from the author giving you authority to negotiate, it'll be all right. By the way, what is his name? It isn't on the manuscript.'

"The little man hemmed and hawed and finally told me the name was Smith.

"'And I suppose since he's in Chicago, you've got some letters from him to show this is all right and done with his knowledge?'

"'I have them at home,' said the little man, and he ran out of the place. If you ask me, we'll never see him again! Mr. Shorter's furious, says the man doubtless stole the manuscript and that I ought to have kept him and questioned him, and that he will not be able to publish the stuff unless he can get hold of the author, and here he is with this remarkable novel and he'll have to bury it, because I was such a fool."

"What did you say the book was about?" I asked. Schreiber told me.

"Is the title 'The Eye'?"

"Good Lord!" said Schreiber, "you know something about it?"

"I believe I do."

"Well, look here. You come right round to Mr. Shorter with me this minute."

"Too busy," I answered. "Besides, I don't know whether — I don't know exactly what I ought to do."

"You don't know what to do? Why, the

thing for you to do is to tell the author to go see Mr. Shorter. He'll treat him well. He's really keen. Of course, the book's crude and all that, and maybe it'll fall perfectly flat—"

Schreiber's enthusiasm fell off so palpably at the very hint of putting a money value on it that I began to laugh. "Suppose you tell Mr. Shorter," I went on, "that I almost think I can find the author, but that I don't want to disappoint him by raising false hopes of what Mr. Shorter is going to do for him. You ask Mr. Shorter to send me word what that book's worth with a clear title and I'll hope to give him a reply by to-morrow morning."

Schreiber laughed too. "You're a shrewd one, you are!" said he. "I'll tell Mr. Shorter."

I was scarcely back at the office again when a messenger brought me a note from Mr. Shorter. It was written in his usual dignified style. He understood, it ran, that I might be able to put him in communication with the author of "The Eye," a work which he considered to be, despite its crudity, a remarkable book and one which he *would* be gratified to put upon his list. He

trusted that my hope would prove to be well founded, and that I would write the author immediately to call upon him (Mr. Shorter's respect for the sanctity of the infinitive was nearly slavish). He felt confident that he and the author would have no difficulty in making satisfactory financial settlements in view of the fact that he was prepared to offer a fair percentage of royalty and, if the author's arrangements made it desirable, to pay to him at the present time some reasonable sum on account of such royalty. And he was with compliments and much appreciation of my courtesy in the matter, faithfully mine, John Shorter.

I thought John Shorter seemed rather a disappointing signature to such a fine sounding epistle; it ought to have been something like "Maximilian Montmorency." I laughed at the pomposity of this man who was big and talented enough to have afforded to be simple. And then I went back to my work, for it was an excessively busy day.

At half-past five I left the office and, for the first time commenced to ask myself what I should

do. It seemed as if it was inevitable that I should see Larry. I had not till then really taken this fact into my mind.

I stopped short at a street corner and caught at my breast. "My God, I can't!" I whispered. A conception of all the suffering it would cause me surged over me. I stood there — I fancy it must have been for a considerable time, for finally someone came up and spoke to me.

Then I hurried home, determined to make the pain as short as possible, to go to him that evening and get it over. I shuddered at the prospect — to go there pale and ugly and find him with his tea-shop girl; to face their surprise, her possible indignation, or — if she knew of how things had been between Larry and me, and what was more probable? — to find her either laughing at me or pitying me; to tell Larry of his good luck; to have him thank me constrainedly; to go away and leave them to rejoice together, while I, with my wound fresh opened by the sight of him, must go back to my flat — alone. How could God be so cruel to me? Why was I so placed

as, willy-nilly, to have to do this thing? It seemed a senseless torture.

I changed my mind. I would not go. I would write to Larry instead. What a fool I was, not to have thought of this before. But an instant's reflection showed me that this course would serve only to prolong my agony. Eventually I would have to see Larry, I knew, to accept his gratitude, to see him pitying me in my suffering — gratitude, pity from him, I shrank from the thought.

I flung myself into the green chair. I was suffering again as poignantly as I did in the first days of my bereavement; the thing I had longed so passionately to forget was thrown back at my heart.

An ugly thought came into my head — suppose I should do nothing; should neither go to Larry nor write to him, should tell Shorter I had been mistaken in thinking I knew the author? This would be a revenge for what he had done to me, and for the hypocritical way in which he had done it — "All for your sake," as he said; but did I want revenge? No, I wanted only to forget, to

nurse my poor heart back to health again. And this I could not do — I saw before me months of misery such as I had first known. How amazingly cruel life was!

Then dimly a new light shone into my mind. I began to realise how much this would mean to poor Larry, this bit of good luck after his heaped up disappointments.

I remembered him as he was in the earliest days of our acquaintance, before questions of emotion came between us. Poor child — how pathetically in earnest he was about this new profession of his, how pompous and proud of himself for being an author, and how humble in his heart and ready to listen to my criticism and advice.

I remembered the stories he had shown me, nearly all bad and yet with a sort of differentness. I had recognised his promise, and now I realised that probably his talent was not suited to short story writing, that doubtless this novel of his showed him to far better advantage than had the things he had let me read.

I remembered his grief at the loss and how I

had comforted him — such a child he was. At first, before passion overtook us, I had longed to help him, had hoped sometimes he would come to big things and that to my encouragement would be due some of the credit. It was a very simple ambition I had had. "Every true woman's a mother at heart," Gordon once confided to me; and it was this kindly elementary impulse that moved me towards Larry. It was the first normal, kindly feeling that I had experienced for many months. I was in a bad way when I first met Larry.

Suddenly I woke to the fact that, miserable and forsaken as I was now, I was a healthier and happier creature for knowing him. I had suffered, it is true, but I was alive now, and a real person. It is strange that just then, as I recalled all the pain he had brought me and looked forward to the pain he was to bring, I should have felt a burst of gratitude towards him.

"Thank God I can do this for him! He's done so much for me," I cried aloud. "Why, it'll alter all his life, maybe."

The humiliation and the suffering that I must

undergo seemed as nothing to me. I would go to him now, at once.

"Your bath has been ready this twenty minutes, Mademoiselle," interrupted Clémentine from the door.

There is something odd in the moral effect of a large body of water confined in the bathtub. Seemingly no matter what is one's frame of mind when one steps into it, one feels quite different when one steps out. I have known a bath to quench melancholy, and to blot out high spirits and sooth vague longings. That night it seemed to dampen my spirit of exaltation. I went to the tub a very heroine; I came away wondering which of my dresses would have the most devastating effect on Larry's tea-shop lady.

I decided on a long, black one, something which I had got from Doucet in the old days and scarcely worn since. I determined to go in a cab. I told myself it was because I could not go into that slum on foot in the dark. But in my heart I fancy I had another motive — a similar one to that which made me choose the black dress.

'Mademoiselle will be out all the evening?" said Clémentine, more than a little astonished at my preparations. "Mademoiselle dines out?"

"No, I don't think so," I answered, distrait.

"I will keep dinner hot, then."

"No! No!" I cried. I pictured the horrid home-coming I should have. My cab and my Doucet frock seemed small consolation now. I sat on the edge of my bed, trembling. It seemed as if I could not face it.

But at last I pulled myself together and was off. As I closed the flat door I little dreamed in what mood I should return to open it.

"Drive quickly!" said I to the cabman; and then as the street corners flashed by and I saw myself going nearer and nearer, and all unprepared to meet what was before me, I tugged down the window and cried to him to go slowly. But we were there pitifully soon.

As I stepped hesitatingly from the cab, a beggar woman accosted me. "For the love of Heaven, give me the price of a drink, lady," she whined. "God, it's so cold and you so well off and happy, lady."

"Happy?" I said it after her with a laugh, and fished into my purse for a coin.

She peered at me curiously; she must have been a rather superior beggar. "Ain't yer happy, then, lady?" she questioned.

I shook my head and gave her the coin.

"I'm terrible sorry, lady," said she, and made off to the saloon across the way.

Larry's doorway was before me. Alongside it was the ash-tin. Under the thin coating of snow which topped it, I fancied I saw another pair of old corsets.

I shivered and went in.

"Wait for me, please," I called back to the cabman.

The door slammed behind me and I went up the dark stairs.

THE END.

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